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THE MARKED MAN.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

FRANK TROLLOPE,

Author of "An Old Man's Secret," "A Right Minded Woman," "Broken Fetters," &c., &c.

[SECOND EDITION.]

VOL. I.

LONDON:
T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.
1871.

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THE MARKED MAN.

CHAPTER I.

"MAJOR FITZGERALD! where in the name of all the saints have you come from?" exclaimed Colonel Stevens, shaking his friend's hand warmly, as they met in Bond Street.

"From France."

"What brings you to London at this season?"

"The death of my mother!" replied Fitzgerald, with a sigh.

"I had not heard of her being ill."

"No. She was indisposed only a few days. I had a letter from my brother to say she was

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point, but you must promise to let it be a strictly confidential communication."

"Certainly," replied Colonel Stevens.

"From what I have heard—for I was not born till after the death of Sir William Fitzgerald, my father—the late Baronet was somewhat eccentric, or rather, I should say, peculiar in his opinions. He did not consider either high rank or a princely fortune entitled him, or any man similarly circumstanced, to lead a life of ease and uselessness. On the contrary, he deemed it his duty to exert himself to do something for his country in which he held so large a stake. He was more than once solicited to represent the county in which his extensive property was situated, but he refused. Like myself, he had a strong bias for a military life, which, no doubt, I inherit from him. I have heard the Duke, who knew my father well, say, 'that the English nation, in losing Fitzgerald, lost a great general.'"

"An assertion of no small importance," interrupted his friend.

"Yes, and one I have always valued."

"It may, moreover, prove of some value to Sir William's son, one of these days," said the Colonel, with a significant nod of the head.

"Perhaps so."

"I beg pardon, Fitzgerald, for interrupting the story of your life. Pray proceed."

"Well, my father married the daughter of the Earl of Derwentwater, some six or eight months after he retired from the army, and she idolized her husband. About seven months after his marriage, Sir William was superintending the felling some oak trees in his park, when, by some means, a large branch, to which the workmen had attached a rope, suddenly splintered and fell, striking Sir William on the head, and he died instantaneously. He had not left Lady Maud more than an hour in perfect health—he was brought back a corpse.

"My mother was at the time *enceinte*, and the sudden calamity had such a fearful effect

upon her that Dr. Leatham expressed great doubt as to her surviving the shock. However, being blessed with a good constitution, she sustained no serious injury, and in due time was safely delivered of male twins ; your humble historian being the younger. So you see I have been twice in my life half an hour too late—first, in coming into the world ; and secondly, at my mother's death.

"From my birth Lady Maud could never bear the sight of me; and I was very rarely permitted to be brought into her presence. The cause of this invincible aversion was but too apparent—Nature, in its mysterious ways, had marked my breast with the perfect representation of an oak tree; which mark I retain to this very moment. This cruel memento of my father's death grew larger with my growth, and the larger it became, the more violent was my mother's antipathy.

"My elder brother was nurtured by Lady Maud; but my existence was totally ignored, and I was handed over to the tender mercies

of a wet-nurse, of the name of Singleton, with strict injunctions never to let me be brought into her Ladyship's presence. Such an unnatural order had its baneful effect. I was neglected by the whole of th edomestics; and the wet-nurse herself was the first to set the example. I was treated as a thing born to be despised; in fact, as Singleton said, a monster which, like kittens, ought to be put into a pail of water and drowned.

"I ought not to have said the whole of the domestics, for there was *one* exception, and to me a very important one, being no less a personage than the housekeeper, Mrs. Wilson; to whose kindness and tender mercy I most probably owe my life. She is indeed a kind-hearted and excellent woman, and did her best to supply the place of a mother to me. She was not long in detecting the cruelty which I experienced at the hands of the wet-nurse, Singleton, and she shielded me in every way, and as soon as possible took me under her own charge.

"Mrs. Wilson had been in our family from infancy, and had its interests at heart. She felt for me a true affection, which I was not long in reciprocating. Under her judicious management it is surprising how I throve; she had been very well educated, considering the position she held, and she showed not only judgment, but tact in her method of teaching me; she was firm as she was kind; very persevering, but never harsh. She was careful too that I should be fed on plain, but nourishing food; she encouraged me in all those childish sports which tend to develop and invigorate the frame, taking care that in my dress my limbs were allowed full play, and, by way of making me hardy, she encouraged my going out in all weathers. Mrs. Wilson did not content herself with attending to my health and comforts, but did her utmost to instil into me ideas and principles, the soundness of which I not only have never doubted, but which, I trust, will abide with me through life."

"Upon my word, Fitzgerald, you were lucky in gaining the affections of such a woman."

"Indeed I was; and I trust I shall never disgrace her valuable teachings, but always feel the affection of a son for her."

"I hope, too, to be some day enrolled as one of her friends. You must introduce me to her."

"I shall do so with pleasure."

"How long did you remain under the guardianship of this estimable woman?"

"Eight years."

"After that?"

"It was determined I should be sent away from home; and I was dispatched to a common boarding school in the North of England."

"And the parting between your mother and yourself?"

"She would not see me, although Wilson tried her very best to induce her to take leave of me."

"And poor Mrs. Wilson?"

"Dear, kind woman. I can almost fancy I feel now the hot tears on my cheeks, as she embraced me tenderly, and sobbed out—

"'God bless you, my dear boy. I don't know when we may meet again, if we ever do—they won't let you come home again for some long time. Oh! my dear Master Herbert, don't forget the good lessons I have taught you—and, above all, let truthfulness ever be your guide.'

"'I will never do wrong, dear Wilson, if I can help it,' I replied through broken sobs, and with my arms round her neck.

"'That's right, dear boy. But should you ever be tempted or by accident do wrong, own it; for it is only a coward who commits a fault and has not courage enough to own it.'

"'I hope I shall always be grateful to you, my dear, kind, friend, for all the advice you have given me, and have the good sense and the courage to follow it.'

"'Courage, dear Herbert. You won't lack that, for you are a true Fitzgerald. You have your father's countenance and your father's spirit; and remember my words, should we never meet again—remember—you will live to shame those who neglect and despise you!'

"I remained at this school till I attained my fourteenth year, as much forgotten and ignored by my mother as if she had never given me birth. I passed all the holidays at the school. Fortunately, I gained the good-will—nay, I may say, the affection of the mistress, a kind-hearted and intelligent woman, and she made the time pass pleasantly enough. Thanks, too, to Mrs. Wilson, whose early lessons were so judiciously instilled into my mind, my capacity was good; I was as willing to learn as my master was to teach, and fortunately for me, he was a man of sound learning, a good classic, and a first-rate mathematician.

"As I have said, I remained at school till

I was fourteen, and when I returned to Copton Hall, I was well up in mathematics, and could speak French fluently."

"What sort of reception did you meet with on reaching Copton Hall?"

"Mrs. Wilson was in the hall alone, and received me with the same ardent affection that she ever evinced towards me, and I as fondly reciprocated her love."

"'Why, my dear Herbert,' she said, holding me at arm's length, 'how you have grown; you are at least an inch taller than your brother.'

"'Am I?'

"'Yes; and with such a healthy bloom on your cheeks.'

"'I am a good deal altered since we parted, my dear Wilson.'

"And for the twentieth time we again embraced.

"'Altered!' she exclaimed.

"'In everything but my devoted love for you, my best friend.'

"'Thank heaven for that; I never for a moment doubted that you would retain your love for me.'

"'That's right.'

"'Come, my dear boy, you must be hungry after your long journey.'

"'Yes, I am rather hungry; but I should like to see my mother.'

" Poor Wilson's cheerful countenance changed to one of sadness, as she said—

"'Your mother will not see you.'

"'Not see me! What have I done that she will not see me? I never did the slightest thing to offend her.'

"'I cannot say now, dear boy; I will tell you all about the sad affair another time.'

"'Is my brother here?'

"'Yes; he returned from Eton three days since for the holidays.'

"'I am glad of that,' I cried, 'for I shall have a playfellow at any rate.'

"'Yes, I am glad, too; for your mother has given permission for your being as much

together as you please. Come with me, and I will see that you have your dinner.'

"For the first time in our lives, Alfred and I were brought into contact. Like most twins, there was a strong personal likeness to each other. He was sometimes overbearing and selfish, and would give me to understand that he was my superior; but on the whole, I had not much to complain of, for this was to be expected in a baronet and an Eton boy, and one who had been petted and humoured in every possible way. I only laughed at him when he grew grandiose, and forbore to thrash him, as I most assuredly should have done any other boy who had dared to treat me so.

"I often asked him why my mother would not see me; but he either did not, or pretended not to know the reason. Upon more than one occasion I attempted to penetrate her boudoir, but was always prevented by my mother's lady's maid. At length I prevailed on Wilson to tell me why my mother would

not see me. I was greatly shocked when she told me how my poor father had died, and more pitied than blamed my mother for disliking me. The knowledge induced in me a determination to see her, for I felt how sad it was to want an only parent's love.

"I ascertained from Wilson that my mother walked daily, when the weather was fine, in the park, after passing through the flower garden; and the following morning, at the usual hour, I watched for her, and saw her enter the garden and go towards a door, which led to an avenue of elm trees in the park, down which avenue she proceeded, leaving the garden gate open. I followed her, and hid myself just outside the gate, to await her return.

"I think I can see her tall, majestic figure now, clad in the deepest mourning, which she had never laid aside for a moment since her husband's death. Her face was pale as death, and a settled gloom gave to her fine features a severity which inspired me with awe. I

felt as if I were unable to either speak or move, but after a minute, a stronger feeling overcame this, and rushing from my hiding place, I threw myself at her feet, embraced her knees, and looked up into her face, for I was totally incapable of speech. My mother seemed touched by this mute appeal, and placing her hands upon my head, gazed at me with tearful eyes. Emboldened, I seized her hand, covered it with kisses, and eagerly exclaimed—

"'Mother—mother, do love me. What have I ever done to offend you?'

"She was in the act of stooping down to embrace me, when, at the moment, my shirt collar opened and displayed the fatal mark with which nature had branded me. The moment she saw it she averted her eyes, and violently pushed me away, throwing me on my face, and ere I could recover myself, she had passed through the garden gate, closing it after her. That was the last time I ever saw my mother, for in less than a fortnight

after this unlucky attempt, I was sent off to the Military College, at Marlow.

"Fortunately for me, my disappointment was soon forgotten. I was anxious to become a soldier, and when arrayed in the scarlet uniform, trimmed with silver lace, as I looked in the mirror, I forgot everything else in self-admiration. The stiff stock was very galling. I felt as if I had a dog's collar round my neck; but a trifling conceit flitted across my mind that if anybody asked me 'whose dog I was,' I could answer, 'the King's,' and this reconciled me to the inconvenience.

"I got on extremely well at Marlow. My brother came over, with the Earl of S——, to see me. The Lieutenant-Governor assured him that I was an honour to the College; that I had not run into debt, had never been sent to the 'blackhole,' and he had not the slightest doubt whatever that I should turn out an excellent soldier. My brother yawned, and expressed his satisfaction, and told me my pantaloons fitted me abominably.

When he took leave he thrust a five pound note into my hand. My companions said he was a 'trump'—something like a brother. I could not, however, endorse their opinions, for I could not help wishing he had acted more like one. I should have been much better pleased had he shown me more affection and given me less money.

"I remained at Marlow three years, and during the whole of those years, I neither saw nor heard from my mother. Alfred visited me only four times, and wrote some three or four short letters.

"One morning I was summoned to the board-room, and was informed by the Lieutenant-Governor that His Most Gracious Majesty had been pleased to appoint me ensign in the —— regiment of foot, and that I was at liberty to quit the College as soon as I pleased, at the same time complimenting me on my efficiency.

"The following day I was gratified by receiving a communication from my mother's

solicitors, Messrs. Billing and Holmes, enclosing a trifling remittance.

"'It is Lady Maud Fitzgerald's desire that you leave Marlow as speedily as possible,' wrote these gentlemen, 'and proceed to her ladyship's residence in Portman Square, where everything requisite for your outfit will be sent, so that you may, without a moment's delay, join your regiment at the —— depôt.'

"I need scarcely say I was not long in following the instructions of my mother's legal advisers, and as my wardrobe was not very extensive, I left the college in the course of the day.

"On entering the hall of our family mansion in Portman Square, imagine my joy at finding myself tenderly embraced by dear, old, worthy Mrs. Wilson—my delight at once more meeting somebody who loved me, and sympathised with me, and cared for me! Such joy can only be understood and appreciated by those who have, like myself, been deprived of that solace, that necessary in-

gredient in our happiness. I was indeed supremely happy.

"The poor old dear's eyes were overflowing with tears, and for a time she could not speak. At length, however, after sundry embraces, she said, smiling through tears—

"'You did not expect to find me here, Master Herbert; are you not surprised?'

"'Not more surprised than pleased, my dear Wilson,' I cried, kissing her for the thirtieth time.

"'The truth is,' continued she 'my lady has been obliged to dismiss poor Mrs. Merton, and it was absolutely necessary for me to come to town; and now I'm here I hope I shall remain, for Singleton's conduct is so overbearing there's no putting up with it.'

"'Not worse than it used to be, I should think,' said I.

"'Indeed, it is much worse, Master Herbert. You've no idea what an overbearing woman she has become. She interferes and pokes her nose into everything, and, in fact, quite

I do declare you are nearly as tall as your poor father was.'

"'Yes, I have been fulfilling the old proverb, that 'ill weeds grow apace,' said I, laughing.

"'You are very like your brother,' pursued she, 'only stouter, and more manly,' she added emphatically.

"'Where is my brother now?' I asked.

"'At Cambridge,' she replied, 'did you not know it?'

"'No,' said I mournfully, 'I am sorry to say, there is very little intercourse between us. Indeed, for some time past, he has quite cut me.'

"'That's a pity; so nearly connected as you are.'

"Indeed, it is, but it cannot be helped. How is he going on?'

"Wilson shook her head.

"'Not satisfactorily, I fear,' I said. 'I am sorry for that.'

"'Bless you! my lady indulges him in

every way,' continued Wilson. 'I am afraid he'll be quite spoilt. He looks upon us servants as so much dirt—born only to obey and serve him. Then he's so particular—will have everything his own way, and everything of the best—horses, carriages, jewellery, clothes, perfumes, and what not! No fine lady can be more fastidious—and such an epicure! I can't tell you the trouble I have to get him a dinner he will eat; and all this before he is turned eighteen. It grieves me to the heart to witness it. My poor master was so totally different! and so, too, are you, Master Herbert.'

"'We must make every allowance for him, Wilson,' said I. 'You must recollect the difference between Alfred and myself. He is a baronet with a large fortune, I am nobody, with no fortune at all; as Pistol says: 'The world is mine oyster,' and I have only my sword to open it with. Now, my brother, you know, has come into the world with his oyster ready opened.'

"'Well, it does seem hard,' said Wilson, after a short pause, 'that one little half-hour should have made such a difference between you. But so it is, and it can't be helped. Come this way, Master Herbert, and I will show you your room, and if old Wilson can make you comfortable, depend upon it she will.'

"And comfortable the kind-hearted old dear did make me. The month I passed with her, although it was November, and Town empty, proved the happiest I had yet known. The house was large, the furniture old, cumbrous, and faded. Antiquated escritoires and cabinets abounded. The mirrors were hazy, the girandoles and chandeliers were cloudy, the portraits grim. All this interested me. But brought up in the country, and accustomed to lake scenery, I had no sympathies with an out-door London life. When I had visited the tailor, accoutrement-maker, &c., seen the guard mounted at the Horse Guards, and strolled home again through the

Parks, I should have found my time hang very heavily on my hands, had I not fortunately found a resource in the library. I believe I read more books during that one month I passed in Portman Square than I had done previously in the whole seventeen years of my existence.

"I must confess that my course of reading was very miscellaneous. It included history, travels and biography, plays, sermons, novels and poetry, which ever came uppermost. I remember being especially pleased with the 'Castle of Otranto,' a splendid copy, which, from the autograph on the fly leaf, had been presented to my grandmother by no less a person than Horace Walpole. But of all the books I perused, Scott's 'Marmion' was the one that pleased me most. I was never tired of pouring over this most fascinating metrical romance, which had just then made its appearance, and was in the height of its popularity.

"When tired of reading, I went and sat

with Wilson, in her little snug parlour, and listened to her legends of the bold Fitzgeralds, of which she possessed an endless number, and which she was not more eager to tell than I was to listen to, for I had always taken a strong interest in my family, and valued myself not a little as belonging to a race that could trace its pedigree as far back as the Conquest. This may be considered a weakness. Perhaps it is so, but without stopping to discuss the point, it is certain that I possess it in common with hundreds of others, nor would I be without it. Wilson, who as I have before mentioned, had been born in the family, had no wishes unconnected with the family. The good creature's whole soul was bound up in the happiness and prosperity of the Fitzgeralds, and in my welfare more particularly.

"The month expired, and a few days only elapsed ere my outfit was completed. I took an affectionate leave of Wilson, and made the best use of my time in reaching the depôt of my regiment, which latter was in the Penin-

sula. I had not been at the depôt any great length of time ere I was ordered to join my regiment.

"Before sailing, I determined to make another effort to see my mother, and accordingly wrote an affectionate letter to her, begging earnestly for her consent to see me, and that I would, without a moment's delay, post down to her. I also wrote to my brother to the same effect. My mother declined seeing me, but enclosed a small remittance. My brother answered my letter, which I give you, as nearly as I can recollect, in his own words:

"Trinity College.

"MY DEAR FELLOW,

"Ten million pardons for not replying to your letter before, but I received it just as I was leaving town for Blenheim with Churchill, and forgot all about it. Of course I shall be delighted to see you if you come. I hope you will soon give a good account of

those Imperial French ruffs; but don't eat garlick if you can avoid it, as it taints the breath, which is a horrid nuisance. Of course you take Jones' tooth-brushes. I think Gattie and Pierce's powder is the best.

"Yours affectionately,

"ALFRED FITZGERALD."

CHAPTER II.

"At the conclusion of my first campaign, I saw there were many things I must do if I hoped to succeed in my profession. The first was to rely upon myself; the second not to acknowledge such a word to exist as *impossible;* and lastly, to bear patiently, if not cheerfully, what could not be remedied or avoided. By adopting this creed, I not only made myself efficient, but preserved my efficiency, where the habitual grumblers succumbed altogether, or became comparatively useless. Consequently, when anything out of the common way was required, the Colonel's

cry always was, 'Where's Fitzgerald? Tell Fitzgerald to come to me.'

"One day the regiment was about to cross a rapid river, with high, rocky banks; it was discovered that the bridge was unsafe. No engineer officers were at hand. As usual, on such emergencies, the cry was, 'Where's Fitzgerald? Send Fitzgerald here.' I selected a working party to repair the bridge. While thus occupied, Lord Wellington, with Fitzroy Somerset, galloped up.

"'What's the matter here?' asked his Lordship, in his usual quick way.

"'He was told, and seeing that the evil was being remedied, passed on. At length the bridge was made available, and when the rear guard had passed over, I was preparing to follow, when Fitzroy Somerset rode up, and told me Lord Wellington wished to speak to me. Accordingly I went to the great captain, who said—

"'What's your name?'

"'Fitzgerald, my Lord.'

"'Any relation to the late Sir William Fitzgerald?'

"'Son, my Lord.'

"'Ah! now I look at you, I see you're like him. I knew your father well. He was a good soldier—a very good soldier—none better.'

"'I have always been led to understand he was, my Lord.'

"'You bridged that river well. Do you understand the language of the country?'

"'Yes, my Lord.'

"'Good! For the future you will be attached to the Quarter-Master-General's department. Report yourself at once to General ———. Good morning.'

"'*You bridged that river well!* I felt proud of those words from such a distinguished man; yes, and I verily believe, more so than I should have done in being master of my brother's estate. I remained in the Quarter-Master-General's department during the rest of the

war, performing all sorts of duties, according to my powers of adaptability, such as engineering, reconnoitering, sketching, procuring intelligence, &c., &c., and on one occasion I narrowly escaped being shot for a spy. I was nearly ending all my troubles and my life at the same time, being severely wounded; and had it not been for my faithful servant, Jackson, who rushed, at the risk of his life, to my assistance, I must have perished. But, in his own peculiar fashion, he conveyed me to a place of safety. My wounds were very severe, and caused me to be confined to hospital for some weeks, and during those weeks I received a letter from my brother Alfred; an unusual honour, expressing the great regret he felt at seeing my name among the casualties, begging me to write to him on the first opportunity, or if I were not well enough, to get one of my brother officers to write for me, or in any other way to let him know how I was progressing.

"My brother did not name my mother, or

allude to her in any way; nor did she send me a single line on the occasion herself, a proof of maternal insensibility which grieved me more for her sake than my own. As for Alfred's letter, I was willing to see as much of *the brother* in it as I could, and wrote to him as affectionately as it was possible, thanking him for the anxiety which he had evinced for my welfare; telling him that I was progressing favourably, as my own handwriting would testify.

"When I had sufficiently recovered from my wound, I returned to England, and on my arrival in London I went to the Hummums, in Covent Garden, for in those days there were no military club houses. My motive in going to an hotel in preference to my mother's mansion, was that I did not feel inclined to take up my quarters under the roof of a parent who had behaved so cruelly and treated me so harshly, even if she would have received me, which I thought was very problematical.

"This course my natural pride and self-

respect dictated; for, as I had never, either in word or deed, given my mother the slightest offence, I felt that I had not merely been neglected by her, but positively insulted. My brother deserved some courtesy from my hands, so I despatched Jackson to Portman Square with a note, simply announcing my arrival at the Hummums, leaving it entirely to his own discretion to call upon me or not, as he felt inclined.

"Before Jackson could possibly return with an answer, my brother's travelling chariot and four dashed up to the Hummums, and set the whole establishment in motion. In a minute or two the door of my dingy drawing-room was thrown open by the waiter, who, with a voice considerably louder than was his wont, announced—

"'Sir Alfred Fitzgerald, to see Major Fitzgerald.'

"As my brother advanced, I was considerably struck by the strong personal resemblance we bore to each other, which, making all due

allowance for the wear and tear of half-a-dozen campaigns, was remarkable. Of course, in dress, manner, and all the conventionalities and refinements of fashionable life, the associate and intimate of Brummel and 'the first gentleman in Europe,' he was infinitely my superior. But in every other respect I had no reason to be dissatisfied with myself.

"'I am both glad and sorry to see you,' said Sir Alfred, shaking me with apparent cordiality by the hand, 'glad, because it gives me the opportunity of congratulating you on your recovery; sorry, because you have arrived in town at the moment I am leaving it. My travelling carriage was at the door when your note was given me, and I can make you no more than a flying visit, as I am *en route* for Paris to join my mother.'

"'Are you?' said I, scarcely knowing whether to be pleased or otherwise at hearing this.

"'Yes, she has been there these six weeks. I should have joined her before, only I have

been detained by those pests of society, the lawyers, and other confounded annoyances. But what in the world,' he continued, gazing round at the shabby furniture, and cautiously seating himself on the sofa, with a rueful countenance, 'what in the world induced you, my good fellow, to get into such a dog kennel as this? Why didn't you drive to the old shop at once?'

"'Why—I didn't like to do that,' said I, in a hesitating manner.

"'Not like. What do you mean?'

"'I couldn't tell exactly how—'

"'How what?'

"'Why, how you might be engaged,' continued I, not liking to tell the true reason. 'I thought my coming might cause you inconvenience, you know. But dog kennel as you call this room,' added I, laughing, 'it appears a luxurious apartment to an old campaigner like myself, accustomed as I have been to rough it. Why, many a time I have thought myself a lucky individual to be able to get to

the lee side, on a windy night, in a dry ditch or hedge.'

"'Oh! that's all very well when you're campaigning, as you call it; but you must not remain here,' continued my brother. 'My valet would turn up his nose at it; it's not a proper place for you to be in. You really must get away from it as soon as you can; it smells horribly,' and he took from his pocket a perfumed pocket-handkerchief, and whirled it about his head. 'You must make the best of your way to Portman Square. Positively the air of this room is enough to stifle a toad! I've told Wilson to have everything in order for you.'

"This, I thought, looked promising, and as I had no wish to be otherwise than on good terms with my brother, I accepted his offer, and rang the bell for Jackson, and gave orders for our removal.

"'I am very much vexed,' continued my brother, 'that I am compelled to leave town —I must go—I can't stay—for I've a letter

which I promised to deliver within eight-and-forty hours; it is of consequence, so I cannot delay my departure, or I shall miss the packet.' Then turning to Jackson, he said pettishly, 'My good man, do shut that door, when you have put those things out of your hands, or I shall catch a cold that will lay me up for weeks. Yes, and go and tell my man to keep his horses well in hand, and move them about till I come.'

"'That's a beautiful turn-out of yours, Alfred,' I said, looking at his travelling chariot, drawn by four splendid chestnuts, about which a large number of persons had collected.

"'Yes,' he said, carelessly, 'they are well matched.'

"'Very well,' I said.

"'So they ought to be, they cost me a small fortune.'

"'Your chariot, too, is very handsome, but somewhat light.'

"'Ah! that's what I'm afraid of. Too light, I fear, to stand the wear and tear of the

French paving. My coach-builder says it will. What is your opinion, Herbert?'

"'I have some doubts about the matter,' said I, 'those stones—'

"'Ah! don't tell me,' interrupted he, hastily. 'Don't say a word about it, I must take my chance. If I escape a break down, I shall I suppose be nearly shaken to pieces.' But stopping suddenly, and staring hard at me, after a severe scrutiny, he continued, 'Where in the name of all that's horrible in taste, did you get that outlandish waistcoat? Your coat's bad enough, but your waistcoat would be scouted by my stable-boy. Where on earth did you get it?'

"'At Toulouse,' said I, laughing; 'I flattered myself I was quite a buck in it.'

"'Did you? By Jove it's not only *too loose*, but *too long* as well.'

"'Yes,' I continued, with a laugh; 'and you have inflicted a severe wound on my *amour propre*.'

"'Oh! for heaven's sake,' pursued my

brother, 'send for Stultz, and be made decent directly. By-the-bye, your name's up at the Horse Guards. I met the Duke the other day at Will Winslow's. I wonder where Winslow gets his goose livers—they are positively exquisite.'

"'Like my waistcoat,' I said, with a laugh.

"'Faugh!'

"'Well, and what said the Duke?' I asked.

"'His grace said you were a soldier to be depended on, and would be a rising man. And, of course, you know,' continued my brother, yawning, "I was uncommonly pleased to hear it.' He took out his watch and observing the time, said, 'By Jove! I must go. You will find my cook a tolerably good one.'

"'Oh! I've not been accustomed to good cooking, and my tastes are very simple.'

"'Would to heaven mine were!' he interrupted with a heavy sigh. 'Unfortunately

I am the most sensitive, the most fastidious being in existence; I must have the greatest possible luxuries. I cannot exist without them. They are positive necessaries to me!'

"'All affectation,' laughed I.

"'There's no affectation in what I am telling you, Herbert; I wish with all my heart there was. You can't conceive, you cannot have the slightest idea, what my wardrobe, my jewels, my furniture, my horses, my perfumes, and other things,' added he, colouring; 'cost me. And the worst of it is I cannot do without them. I verily believe I should blow out my brains if I could not get them.'

"'Come, come, not quite so bad as that,' said I, smiling, though thoroughly distressed and shocked to hear him talk thus. 'You surely cannot be so wedded to the good things of this life as you imagine you are. Exert yourself, become a man of business, and—'

"'Business!' he repeated, pettishly; 'I hate business. No, no, I can't change; my habits

are too confirmed. What I am, or rather what my mother has made me, I must continue. Would to heaven she had never petted me, and over-indulged me as she has,' he continued, pacing up and down the room; 'and encouraged me to mix myself up with the set I have got into. Oh! I would ten thousand times rather she had neglected me as she has you, and cared for me as little. But 'tis no use wishing now.' Then discontinuing his promenade, he said, 'By-the-bye, what makes my mother dislike you, Herbert, as she evidently does?'

"'Have you forgotten?' I replied, baring my bosom.

"'Ah! yes. I recollect now. By Jupiter! how surprising. If Linton had painted an oak and stuck it on there, it could not be more like one.'

"'Have you any mark of the sort?' I enquired.

"'No, nothing whatever,' and he opened his shirt for me to look.

"'It's very strange I shouldn't have had a

similar mark,' continued my brother. 'At any rate your being marked is no fault of yours; and does not justify my mother's either disliking or neglecting you, and so I shall tell her.'

"'I wish you would,' said I, reflecting that it might make a considerable difference in my position. 'Tell her I am quite ready to join her in Paris, if she wishes it.'

"'I will certainly tell her,' replied my brother, arranging his cravat at the glass; 'but I must be off, I positively cannot stay another moment. By-the-bye, my dear fellow, pray go to Portman Square at once, and get out of this stinking hole,' and he again waved his scented pocket handkerchief around his head. Then giving me two fingers and again turning to arrange his cravat at the glass, he hurried out of the room, leaving me in a state of uncertainty as to whether I ought to be pleased with this interview or not.

"As far as Alfred himself was concerned, I had no uncertainty. I saw with more pain

than surprise that he was a drone, and a voluptuary, a character doubly contemptible to an old campaigner like myself, accustomed to regard luxuries, or even personal comfort, as secondary considerations. On the other hand, he did not appear to me to be altogether devoid of brotherly feeling, and was evidently sincere in wishing me to locate myself in his house.

"'And there's no reason why I shouldn't do so,' I soliloquised. 'No reason at all; indeed it will appear ungracious should I not.'

"So I paid my bill, and telling Jackson to call a hackney coach, set off at once for Portman Square.

"Mrs. Wilson was on the look out for me. 'Major Fitzgerald!' she began, but nature was too strong for her, and clasping her arms round my neck, she fairly kissed me; I heartily returned her embrace, and we literally blubbered together, laughing not a little at one another when we became calmer.

"'But I am very angry with you, Master Herbert,' said the good old soul, wiping away her tears. 'God forgive me! but I verily believe I should call you "Master Herbert" if you were made a king.'

"'Continue to call me so, dear Wilson,' said I. 'I like to hear you. You cannot think what pleasure it gives me. It reminds me so forcibly of old times, when we were so happy here together. But why are you so angry with me?'

"'Because you didn't drive here at once, instead of going to that nasty, filthy hotel. How could you be so foolish, Master Herbert?'

"'Why, I did not know, Wilson—I was not quite sure—'

"'Ah! I see,' rejoined she, significantly. 'I quite understand; you thought *she* might be here, and that even *he* might not be quite willing to receive you. Yes, yes; I see plainly enough your motive, and I believe, after all, I'm an old fool, and you have acted

wisely. But good heaven!" continued she, laughing, 'what a great, tall fellow I've been hugging and kissing. I declare you are quite a man!'

"'It would be strange if I were not, my dear old friend,' said I, laughing too. 'You forget how many years have passed since we last met.'

"'To be sure—to be sure,' replied Wilson, 'so they have—so they have. I didn't give a thought of that, in my great delight in seeing you again. Your brother is a man, so, of course, you must be one as well; and for matter of that, you are as alike as two peas, only you are more of the marrowfat! My gracious! here's a pair of broad shoulders! Why, the frog-eating Frenchmen must have been frightened at the bare sight of you.'

"'The French are not so easily frightened as you seem to imagine. I can assure you they gave us no end of trouble before we beat them.'

"Wilson looked very grave, saying—

"'That's true. You have been wounded; but never mind, we'll soon set you on your legs again—though you seem pretty well set upon them already. But, heaven bless me! how I've been keeping you in the hall. Come along with me, Master Herbert; I've got everything ready for you,' and with this she showed me into a bed-room, in which a fire had been lighted.

"'How comfortable!' I cried, taking a seat in a huge arm chair. 'I shall positively be too comfortable here.'

"'Not a bit—not a bit,' said Wilson; 'not half as comfortable as you deserve to be,' and she poked the huge fire into a blaze.

"'This is the same room I had the last time I was in London, is it not?'

"'Yes, to be sure; and don't you remember your great-aunt, Lady Hervey, there" and she pointed to one of the ancestral pictures, 'that you used to make such fun about?'

"'Oh! perfectly,' replied I, laughing, eyeing the picture with pleasure. 'I am delighted

to see my old acquaintance again. But sit down, Wilson,' added I. 'I want to talk to you. Nay, nay; don't stand on ceremony, my dear, best friend. What I have to say is of consequence, and I know I can rely on your discretion. Tell me, what did my mother say when she heard that I was wounded?'

"'Not anything. You know, Master Herbert, she never does say much about anything or anybody. But I could see that she was greatly agitated.'

"'In what way?'

"'I can't tell you; certainly not in the way I was; for I really thought my heart would break.'

"'Did she seem sorry or glad?'

"'Well, as I said before, I really am unable to tell. She snatched the paper out of your brother's hand, and read with her own eyes, that your name was mentioned in the list of wounded.'

"'And Alfred, how did he receive the intelligence?'

"'Oh! for him he was greatly moved, and declared he'd drive down to the Horse Guards instantly, and endeavour to ascertain how you were progressing; on which your mother said, 'Do!' and that I believe, as well as I can recollect, was all she did say.—Did she write to you?'

"'No, but Alfred did; a tolerably kind letter, urging me to let him know, without delay, either by my own hand, or somebody else's, how my wound was going on. I confess I should have been much more satisfied, Wilson, if my mother had written only a single line herself.'

"'Ah! she has much to answer for on your account, Master Herbert,' and the good old soul heaved a deep sigh; 'I can't for the life of me understand it.'

"'How long has my mother been in Paris?'

"'Six weeks.'

"'Did my brother go with her?' I asked.

"'No.'

"'How was that?'

"'Oh! there was some hitch about money matters, I believe, which was only got over yesterday.'

"'Only yesterday!'

"'Yes,' continued Wilson, 'but your brother gave me strict orders to make you as comfortable as possible. Just as if, Master Herbert, that was necessary,' said the good old creature, smiling. "Why does he go to an hotel?" said he, after reading your note, "when he must know he ought to have come here." I do believe, after all, his heart is in the right place.'

"'Wilson,' I cried, starting up, 'it cuts me to the soul to see my brother what he is—what injudicious indulgence, and his own want of resolution have made him; and it is my firm determination to leave no stone unturned to rescue him from the debasing thraldom he is in, to detach him from his present habits and connections, and save him, if possible, from himself; it is this, my worthy, kind, estimable friend, that I wanted par-

ticularly to have some conversation with you about. Tell me, therefore, without the slightest reserve, all you think it requisite I should know concerning my brother and his affairs, and let no feeling of delicacy induce you to conceal from me any particular, a knowledge of which you think essential to enable me to carry out my wishes and intentions.'

"'My dear Master Herbert,' exclaimed Wilson, joyfully; 'it does my old heart good to hear you talk so; may God, in His goodness and mercy, aid you in your kind efforts. I really shall begin to have some hope that your brother may be saved from the perilous and sad position in which he is placed, and in spite of all that he has done, turn out an honour instead of a disgrace to his family and name. But,' continued the kind old soul, and her countenance changed, 'you little suspect, Master Herbert, what a task you have taken upon yourself?'

"'Oh! I already know enough to assure me that what I have undertaken will prove

an arduous and unpleasant duty, and by no means an easy one. But I am not so easily turned from my purpose, Wilson. It is the part of a soldier's duty to grapple with difficulties; and depend on it, that no exertion, no want of perseverance on my part, shall prevent the execution of my plan being successful.'

"'Well, all I can say is, as I said before, may God in His goodness and mercy aid you in your efforts; and you may fully rely on my giving you every information I possess, as well as all the assistance in my power. But come with me, and I will shew you, at a glance, what will give you a better insight into your brother's character, habits and tastes, than all I could tell you in a month.'

"Wilson led me down a passage of some length, at the end of which we ascended a few steps, leading to a door in the wall, covered with green baize; opening this, another door was seen, which, Wilson, taking a key from her girdle, unlocked, and I found

myself at the head of a small staircase, lit by a skylight, in a vestibule or corridor, which was handsomely carpeted, and into which several doors opened. Bronze figures, bearing argand lamps, stood in niches; and the walls were painted a light green to match the carpet.

"'This must be all new, Wilson,' I said. 'I have not the slightest recollection of having seen it before.'

"'Yes; you are quite right. It is all new since you were last here,' replied my worthy old friend. 'Your brother has built an entire new wing, which has taken away half the garden, and extends almost to the stables. This is his bath room,' and she opened the door which was nearest to us.

"It was small, but admirably adapted to its purpose, and fitted up with every conceivable article that could conduce to either the convenience or enjoyment of the bather. From the bath-room we passed into my brother's dressing-room, and from that into his bed-

room. In both of these apartments, as in the bath-room, whatever could please the eye, or contribute to the ease of the body, was carefully studied, but there was no unnecessary display, or unmeaning ornament, and everything was in good taste and perfect harmony. The chairs of ebony, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and covered with the richest green velvet, the seats of which were stuffed with the softest down, and constructed so as most to contribute to the ease and comfort of the sitter. The walls of the bed-chamber, hung with dark green silk and wadded, prevented all sound; and everything around showed, what my brother had said, that luxuries were to him absolute necessaries.

"'This is the drawing-room,' said Wilson, throwing open a small door near which she was standing.

"I paused the instant I entered the room, transfixed with wonder and admiration. I had seen the Escurial as well as the English and French palaces, but I declare to you,

Stevens, I never saw anything that gave me such astonishment as this drawing-room of Alfred's. The walls were hung with a beautiful pale, amber-coloured satin, covered with silver stars, and surmounted by a cornice also of silver, more elaborate and chaste than anything I had ever seen; most exquisite figures, holding festoons of flowers, sported on the ceiling, from which a chandelier of the purest and clearest crystal and most elegant design depended. Draperies of light blue damask, fringed with silver, were gracefully thrown over bows of superbly chased silver. The furniture was in keeping with the rest—it was satinwood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A carpet of the richest description covered the floor, to tread on which was like walking on down. The chimney-piece was of the purest white marble; the mirrors were of silver, while at the further end of this magnificent apartment, in which all that exquisite taste and refined judgment could

accomplish, was a conservatory filled with the choicest exotics.

"'Is my brother musical?' said I, taking up a guitar which lay on a superb horizontal grand piano.

"'No, but he has those come here who are,' said Wilson, pointing to a tablet of mother-of-pearl.

"Inscribed on the tablet was the name of a *prima donna*, one of the most profligate women in the world, one who had ruined a host of young men, and whose charms of person were almost equalled by her unrivalled musical abilities.

"'I am astonished,' cried I, 'that my mother should engage such a woman to sing at her parties. Such a notoriously bad character ought not to be admitted into the house.'

Wilson shrugged her shoulders.

"'I see,' said the worthy creature, with a sigh, 'you've no idea of the state of things here.'

"'Indeed I have not,' I replied, gravely; 'but tell me.'

"'Your mother, my dear Master Herbert, has nothing to do with it. She never comes into this part of the house, which your brother had built for himself.'

"'For himself!'

"'Yes, for his own separate accommodation, and to give his parties in. Booth and some of the men servants wait upon the company; and a pretty set they are, gambling, feasting, guzzling! Mr. Benzoni, I think his name is, says he can't keep up his company for the suppers he's obliged to cook for them.'

"'Does your cook go to the opera?'

"'Bless you! no; Benzoni's the proprietor of the opera house, and such suppers as these are down in his agreement. But come downstairs, Master Herbert, and I'll show you the dining-room.'

"The drawing-room was all silver, the dining-room was all gold. Nothing could be

more gorgeous, or more voluptuous; the pictures, the statues, the whole style of decoration, in short, was calculated not merely to charm the eye, but to rouse the passions and stimulate the appetites.

"'Enough,' said I, disgusted. 'Let us go. I suppose there's a separate entrance to this Pandemonium?'

"'Yes, in Orchard Street. I've nothing whatever to do with this part of the mansion, except seeing that it is kept in proper order when your brother is absent. Now, my dear Master Herbert, was I not quite correct in saying that the task you have undertaken will be a most difficult one?'

"'Difficult, indeed,' replied I, 'but we must not despair. I had not the most remote idea that Alfred, so young a man as he is, could be so confirmed a voluptuary. But does my mother approve of all this?'

"'Approve!' cried Wilson, 'no, indeed she does not, quite the reverse; although, I must say, she has herself to blame for it.'

"'How so?' I enquired.

"'By encouraging Benzoni and the rest of his set. Your mother has become much alarmed lately by the reckless way in which your brother is going on, and wants him to marry; but he won't hear of it. I strongly suspect, that her only motive in going to Paris is to get him out of the way.'

"'And this,' I soliloquised, as soon as I was alone in my apartment, 'this is the result of my mother's constant care and devotion for her first born! I may congratulate myself that she not only never troubled her head about me, but absolutely neglected me. Her hatred has been the best thing that could have happened to me. I confess, I think she is perfectly right in doing her best to get Alfred married. It is the only cure for such a desperate case, and I had best leave the matter entirely in her hands.'

CHAPTER III.

"The 'Morning Post' had no sooner announced the arrival of Major Fitzgerald at the family mansion in Portman Square, than I was besieged with visitors, and inundated with invitations. The season had just commenced, celebrities were in request, and heroes happened to be at a premium. I was brother too to a Baronet, and had been wounded. I became a lion, and all the fashionable and aristocratic mansions were opened to me.

"My servant, Jackson, who derived a sort of moonshine celebrity from the sun of my glory, became a lion, in a small way, also, and while I was a brilliant meteor in the drawing-rooms,

he shone with reflected light in the lower regions, where I have no doubt, he made me out one of the noblest of the monarchs of the forest; with perhaps one exception—himself.

"Though I confess I was much amused at first at the homage I received, and the attention I attracted, I soon got tired of writing my name in young ladies' albums. There was, however, one beautiful and extremely fascinating girl, who entreated me to write only a couple of lines, and she asked me in such a modest manner, so unlike the rest, that on the spur of the moment, I wrote a rhyme which she declared she would preserve to the end of her life. She was a Miss Laws, so I took advantage of her name to play upon it, and wrote—

"Some write for fame, some for applause,
I write for neither—I write for Miss Laws."

"After this, I made a determined stand against the formidable army of button holders not to fight my battles over again, whenever they could get me up in a corner; and one evening, at Lady Eustace Leitrim's, I took the

opportunity, on the *entrée* of another lion, whose superior attractions diverted the attention of the company, to beat a retreat to a distant sofa, on which a young man about my own age was lounging.

"'I congratulate you!' laughed he, heartily; as her ladyship would say, 'You're well out of that!' I have been amusing myself for the last half-hour in watching you, and you will not be angry with me if I confess I've been malicious enough to enjoy your "charming agonies" which, from woeful experience, I can quite comprehend.'

"'I have the honour of addressing a brother "lion," then?' I said.

"'No, thank heaven!' he replied, 'my reign is over; time was, when, like Bottom, I was made to roar so loud, it would have done your heart good to hear me.'

"'Why, where were you wounded?' I asked.

"He laughed till his sides shook.

"'Do you believe there are no lions, but

military ones?' he said, as soon as he could check his fit of laughter. 'I was a literary lion. I perpetrated a poem, which brought me into notice, and nearly ruined me.'

"'Nearly ruined you!'

"'Yes, nearly ruined my reputation.'

"'How so?'

"'As a barrister. Before I wrote "The Alfreda" I was considered a rising man. After that appeared, and it got about that I was the author, those lawyers who had been in the habit of employing me brought no more briefs. I asked one of them the cause for this falling off of business, and he candidly replied, "It is the universal impression amongst lawyers, that a good poet makes a bad lawyer."'

"'What resulted from this state of things?' I asked.

"'Why, fortunately for me, my name was not on the title page, so I fathered my first born on Sam Rogers, whom you see, yonder, talking with Ireland's best poet, Tom Moore.'

"'I suppose, then, you ceased to be a lion?'

"'Yes.'

"'And your practice?'

"'I recovered that; though, as you see, I avail myself of the *entrée* into society which my poem procured; for they could not very well shut their doors against me, after having once admitted me. So, when I want to get rid of Blackston and Chitty, I drop in here, or at Lady Holland's, or at Lady Flintshire's, or at any other collection of lions and lionesses whose menagerie happens to be open, and amuse myself by noting the follies and absurdities of fashionable life, and, indeed, I may say of mankind, which I keenly enjoy, and of which I will give you a striking specimen,' and he pointed out to me a lady of very commanding appearance, who, with a younger one on her arm, was evidently paying the most sedulous attentions to a man, whose extraordinary peculiarity seemed to be the cool, nay, almost contemptuous, insolence with which he regarded them.

"'There, you see,' continued my Asmodeus, 'a peeress of the very highest rank, with Norman blood in her veins, almost going down on her knees to a man of no birth and little fortune.'

"'For what?' I asked.

"'To secure his good word for her daughter, on her entrance into fashionable life,' replied my companion.

"'Is it possible that the good or bad report of such a person can be of the slightest importance to a young lady of her rank?' demanded I, in great surprise.

"'Of the very greatest,' rejoined he, gravely. 'The Duchess of St. Albany knows perfectly well what she is about. Her ladyship is quite aware that Mr. Brummel's opinion of Lady Juliana may make or mar her prospects in the very highest quarter.'

"'I thank you,' said I, 'for enlightening my ignorance; I know very little of the usages of fashionable society.'

"'Ah! fortunately for you; your time has been better employed,' observed my new friend, with some emotion. 'You have been fighting the battles of your country; exposing your life in her defence, and the man who does that not only deserves the thanks of his countrymen, but ennobles himself.'

"I gave him my hand, and I felt that we were friends. We exchanged cards. His name was Sugden, and I called on him the next morning at his chambers in the Temple.

"Mr. Sugden was evidently deeply engrossed with papers, which nearly covered the whole table.

"'You are busy,' I said, shaking hands. 'If you are, tell me so, and turn me out.'

"'I am busy,' he replied, shaking my hand cordially, 'and I will turn you out; but only on one condition, that you return and dine with me, and afterwards accompany me to Covent Garden Theatre. You will, I am sure, be pleased.'

"'What will be performed?'

"'Julius Cæsar; Young and the Kembles are in it.'

"'I shall, I am sure, be more than pleased. Do you meet many of your friends there?'

"'Yes, everybody. It is the place for meeting all the best people in society.'

"'Bravo!' cried I. 'To the right about—march!' and I left him.

"At the appointed time, with soldier-like punctuality, I re-appeared at Sugden's rooms in the Temple. Our dinner, which was furnished from a neighbouring tavern, proved excellent, and we did ample justice to it. Indeed, I don't remember having ever enjoyed one more. The truth was, Sugden and I were congenial spirits, and suited each other, which we soon found out. I need not tell you he was far my superior in literary attainments and general education. He had taken a high degree at Cambridge, and it was evi-

more gorgeous, or more voluptuous; the pictures, the statues, the whole style of decoration, in short, was calculated not merely to charm the eye, but to rouse the passions and stimulate the appetites.

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great deal of each other, and we became great allies; and one evening, as we were walking in the Temple Gardens, I confided to him the anxiety I felt on my brother's account.

"'I hope, in addition to his other extravagances,' said I, 'that he does not gamble; in which case it would be impossible to speculate with any certainty on his position.'

"Sugden smiled.

"'Why do you smile?' I asked.

"'At your supposing Sir Alfred Fitzgerald's gambling will ever hurt him.'

"'What do you mean?' I cried, not understanding him.

"'Why, it's a delicate subject to touch on,' said my friend.

"'Pray put all delicacies on the subject aside,' I said.

"'Well,' continued Sugden, with evident reluctance, 'I said it's a delicate subject to touch upon, nor should I have ventured to do so, if you yourself had not introduced it; but since you have done it, you must pardon me

when I say—and it is only proper and right that you should know it—your brother has the reputation at the clubs of being—perhaps with the single exception of the Duke of Y——, the most successful man, at play, of his time.'

"When I heard this, Stevens, a child could have knocked me down.

"'I had rather you had shot me through the heart, Sugden,' said I, 'than told me this.'

"'Oh! my dear fellow, you take the matter too seriously,' replied my companion, much moved. 'Understand me. Your brother's honour has never been impeached, nor his fairness called in question; nevertheless, the fact is as I tell you; indeed your brother is more envied than otherwise, for his superiority at the whist table, and the man who gets the baronet as his partner considers himself most fortunate—that's all.'

"'I had rather, ten thousand times rather,' said I, 'that my brother had acquired a reputation in some other way.'

"'Most assuredly,' pursued Sugden, 'but—

"'"Some men to business, some to pleasure take,"'

and your brother has chosen the latter. Depend upon it he will never hurt himself at play; you have far more cause for apprehension from his connexion with Celini.'

"'Is she, then, under his protection?' enquired I.

"'As much as such a very free-and-easy woman can be said to be under any man's protection,' replied Sugden, with a smile, 'for Celini is of opinion she ought to make one man happy every day, at least; an opinion she is supposed to religiously act up to. I know your brother has lately paid her debts, for a good many of his kites have been flying about the town in the Israelitish quarters. I know, too, that Sir Alfred made himself liable for the payment of the purchase-money for the beautiful nightingale's superb mansion in St. John's Wood, which those who have seen it say surpasses that of the Duchess of M——.'

"'I feared this,' said I, 'for I saw that

woman's guitar in my brother's own apartment—under the very same roof that shelters my mother!'

"'Oh! you mean the new smuggery your brother added to the old house last year—"Fitzgerald's Folly," as it is called,' cried Sugden, carelessly.

"'What! Have you heard of that?' asked I.

"'Heard of it! my good sir! You might just as well ask me if I've heard of Rosamond's Bower. Nothing else was talked of last season but the vast sums of money your brother had expended upon it, and of the splendid *petits soupers* he gave there, quite in regal style. Whether all these expenses have seriously embarrassed your brother,' continued Sugden, 'I cannot say; but thus much I know, for I drew out the mortgage deeds myself, that he has taken up thirty thousand pounds on the Fitzgerald estate within the last three weeks.'

"'Thirty thousand! that is a large sum?' said I.

"'It is; but not large enough to cause more than a temporary inconvenience to a man with such a rent-roll as Sir Alfred Fitzgerald.'

"'But there may be more mortgages.'

"'True, there may; I will endeavour to ascertain if there be. However, I don't think it probable that a man who knows the world so well as your brother would irretrievably involve himself.'

"'I wish with all my heart that he were married,' said I, mournfully.

"'Very disinterested in you, certainly!' said Sugden, laughing, 'considering you are heir presumptive. Now, I must say good night; if I can gain any further information for you regarding your brother's affairs, I will communicate what I hear to you.'

"'Pray do,' I said, and we parted.

"My brother had been gone upwards of a month, and I began to be exceedingly

anxious, both on his account and my own, to ascertain what had been the result of his intercession with my mother in my behalf, when one morning I received the following letter from him:—

"Paris, ——, 18—.

"You were quite right! The wheels of my trap are no more fitted to stand the wear and tear of the French stones than I am fitted to endure the horrible shaking one has to endure in rolling over them. Nothing but the build of a London drayman can possibly hold out against them. If ever I set up purveyor of locomotives I will deal in Prince Hassan carpets, where people will have only to sit upon them, and in a minute, or less time, they will find themselves at the end of their journey!

"However, to make up for the jolting of the carriage, the perfumes here are exquisite, which is very fortunate. A few days since I dined at Briffault's with three men from my

club, who are now over here, and we all agreed that the *poulêts* and *truffles* were equal to any we had ever tasted. The *bijouterie* in the Palais Royale is superb, far beyond any to be had from Rundell and Bridge. Indeed, in all things where harmony of colouring is required, our neighbours surpass us as much as an English racehorse does a jackass.

"But, my dear fellow, my own enjoyments have not so much engrossed me as to have entirely neglected your interests. On my arrival here I found that my mother had left Paris, on a visit to the Duchess of O—— at Versailles. She returned only yesterday, and this morning at luncheon I broke ground by saying, 'Well, I saw Herbert before I left London, and you can't think what a splendid looking fellow he is! He's ever so much taller than I am, with superb whiskers, positively a perfect Esau, and, as a matter of course, looking upon me as another Jacob,' I said laughing, 'who has robbed him of his birthright.'

"My mother looked up suddenly, but said nothing, so I went on, 'Well, it's all very natural, and I'll be bound to say, if our positions were reversed, I should look at the matter in precisely the same light. But, fortunately for me, in the world's race half an hour's start makes all the difference, you know, and fairly secures a man the stakes, so Herbert can't well complain of any jockeying in the business.'

"'Does he do so?' asked my mother.

"'No, and from what little I have seen of him he's the last man in the world to do it. But he told me to give his love and duty, and all that sort of thing, to you, and to tell you how very anxious he was to see you, after so long an absence; and as you must be anxious to see him, poor fellow, what say you to my writing to invite him over?'

"My mother made no answer, but went on with her luncheon. She's not very demonstrative, you know. 'Besides,' said I, return-

ing to the attack, 'I'm very anxious to see more of my brother, for I had only time to pay him a flying visit at his dirty, stifling hotel, and to call him to order for not going at once to Portman Square. Poor fellow, he must be horridly dull, all alone in that old house with nobody but Wilson to speak to; so it would be but charitable to have him over here. Don't you think so?'

"'No; I do not, my dear Alfred,' said my mother, drily, adding, after a pause, 'Herbert wants repose, and is better where he is.'

"'Oh! he is quite recovered from his wounds, if you mean that,' I rejoined, quickly, 'and his coming over here will be of service to him than otherwise, so I'll write to him at once, poor fellow, and—'

"'Stay!' cried my mother, biting her lip. Then, considering a moment, she added 'it would be exceedingly inconvenient to have Herbert here at this time, Alfred.'

"'I can't see that,' I said, 'why?'

"Because I expect the Countess Trelawney

and her daughter, Lady Susan, from Versailles, here to-morrow,' replied she significantly. 'They will remain some time with us, and —'

"'But that need not prevent Herbert's coming as well,' interrupted I. 'There's plenty of room for us all; my brother's a soldier, you know, and can put up with any den.'

"'True; but still—'

"'Still, what?'

"'Why, Herbert's coming here at this time,' continued my mother, 'might materially interfere with the views I entertain for you, Alfred.'

"'Views for me!'

"'Yes, Lady Susan will have an immense fortune if—'

"'Oh! this is another of your matrimonial schemes, is it?' I again interrupted, extremely vexed. 'How often, my dear mother, must I repeat, that I am not at all inclined to marry, for the present at any rate?'

"And we had a long discussion on the subject, which I need not trouble you with.

"'But even supposing I were inclined to address Lady Susan,' I began again, 'which, however, I have not the slightest intention or inclination to do, how could Herbert's being with us interfere with it?'

"'It might.'

"'How?'

"'It might very seriously; in fact it might completely mar our views altogether, my dear boy,' replied my mother, with an earnestness quite unusual to her. 'Reflect for a moment, only for one moment, my dear Alfred, and you will not fail to see how very impolitic it would be, even with all your advantages, to have such a young man, as you describe your brother, thrown constantly into Lady Susan's company.'

"'Pray let us have no more of this,' cried I. 'If Lady Susan could swerve for a moment in her choice between me and any other man; if she could prefer my brother—'

"'Alfred!' interrupted my mother eagerly, 'you don't know what you are saying; you can have no idea what you are hazarding. You are talking like an idiot—like a very silly young man, wholly ignorant of the ways of the world, and the value of the position you have the good fortune to—to be placed in, and which no man with a tolerable share of intellect would willingly throw away. If you had seen Lady Susan as I have, you would think as I do, and be disposed to act with more caution. Independent of the very large fortune her mother means to give her, she is decidedly the most beautiful and accomplished young woman of her rank I have ever seen. She is precisely the woman to please you. Even Eversley, whom you know is so difficult to please, and whose standard of female beauty is so high, has pronounced her perfect.'

"'Where did you meet these people?' I enquired. 'I never heard of this *rara avis* before.'

"'No. Lady Susan has not come out yet,' replied my mother. 'She has been educated in complete retirement. Her mother brought her over here for the benefit of foreign masters. But Lady Susan's health becoming delicate, the Countess took a house at Fontainbleau, and it was in going over the Palace there that I met with my old friend again, whom I had not seen since I was last at Ventnor. Now, a union with Lady Susan, my dear Alfred," continued my mother, laying her hand upon my arm, and looking into my face with great earnestness, "is in every way so desirable—nay, I may say almost indispensable,—that I should wish you to have as few competitors as possible.'

"'My dear mother,' interrupted I, pressing her hand, 'you mean well—you always do, but—'

"'Nay, just listen to me for a minute, my dear Alfred,' cried my mother, with increased earnestness. 'Lady Susan is very peculiar. She is very unlike most young women we

meet with. She makes a point of thinking as well as acting for herself, giving her mother great uneasiness; indeed causes her great anxiety for her future welfare and settling in life. Now, superior as you are, my dear Alfred, to your brother, I don't choose to—'

"'I really cannot listen to any more of this,' I cried, impatiently. 'You cannot, for a moment, suppose I will allow myself to be swayed by such considerations. Once for all, I tell you I have no inclination to marry Lady Susan or any other lady. Herbert is your son as well as I am, and we are bound to consider his interest. In heaven's name, therefore, let us give the poor fellow a chance, and invite him over. I'll write to him at once, I'm anxious for him to be domesticated under this roof.'

"'And the moment he is,' cried my mother, rising from her chair, 'I'll quit it.'

"'Are you serious?' said I, looking up in great astonishment.

"'Serious! never more so in my life,' she

said, almost trembling with excitement. 'I tell you again, the moment Herbert comes into this house I shall leave it.'

"'Good heaven!' I exclaimed, rising, and looking at her in still greater amazement. 'What is the meaning of all this? What makes you so implacable against the poor fellow? Has he ever offended you? Surely the accidental circumstance of—'

"'Question me not—mention it not,' interrupted she, I might almost say, fiercely. 'On your duty—on your love for me—on your obedience! I desire you not to let me hear any more of this, or to think of bringing that boy over here. His presence is positively hateful to me. Yes! positively hateful!' added she, sinking into a chair, and pressing her forehead with her hands. 'I cannot endure the idea of having him near me! I assure you I think the mere sight of him would drive me mad!'

"I was as much surprised as you will be to hear such words from one who is usually

so calm and impassive—one in every respect totally the reverse of what she was at this moment; I was about to express this, when, with a wave of her hand, and rising, she interrupted me by saying—

"'Not another word, Alfred, on this most distasteful subject. Let us never again mention it. It is sufficient for me to tell you that I have ample reasons for acting as I do and have done.'

"'What may those reasons be?' I asked.

"'It is not requisite that I should tell you what my reasons are, nor shall I inform you. But you may rely upon me,' and she embraced me tenderly and looked affectionately into my eyes. 'Your interests and your welfare will still constitute, as they have ever done, the greatest happiness of my heart and life!' Then imprinting a kiss on my forehead, she left me, thereby preventing my returning to the discussion.

"'I thought it better, my dear Herbert, to tell you everything that occurred, and to be

as candid as possible, even at the risk of wounding your feelings, in order that you may be better enabled to form your own opinion as to the probable cause of this most extraordinary antipathy, which, there is now not the slightest doubt, my mother entertains towards you. My own opinion is, that somehow or other, you have inadvertently wounded our mother's self-love to an extent that she can neither forget nor forgive, or that Singleton has poisoned her mind against you, by the fabrication of some abominable calumny. But, patience is a great virtue, and I do not despair of bringing about a reconciliation yet, and you may depend upon my doing everything in my power to ensure a consummation so devoutly to be desired.

"'Now, my dear Herbert, try all your powers with Mrs. Wilson, and make as much information from her as you can. She may, perhaps, be enabled to throw some light upon the subject. Whilst you are in the old shop, make yourself comfortable. Wilson's

cutlets are not to be despised, and you will find some hock, of 1786, in the cellar, which I can conscientiously recommend.

"'Adieu, my dear Herbert,

"'Ever your affectionate brother,

"'ALFRED.

"'P.S. —*La Belle Anglaise*, as I find Lady Susan is styled here, has this moment arrived with her mother. I have not seen this strong-minded beauty yet. Would you were here to undertake her! I detest these Dr. Johnsons in petticoats with their dogmatism and blueism; and, above all, their pretensions to superiority bore me to death. But my mother means well, and I ought to be obliged to her. Need I say that my purse and my influence are both at your service?'

"Will you blame me, Stevens, if I felt less regret than indignation at this implacable conduct in my mother? In vain I thought over every incident of my life, and endeavoured to remember any act on my part

that could induce the feeling in my mother's breast. I could discover nothing in the remotest degree that could justify such unequivocal demonstration of the bitter hatred she expressed.

"'No matter,' cried I, tossing my brother's letter on the table. 'Let her continue to hate me. I cannot help it. She is much more to be pitied than I am. I have done without her affection and assistance hitherto, and can do without them still. Let her continue to lavish all her caresses, and all her attention on Alfred, I care not! And *he*,' pursued I, growing unjust, as people who give way to anger generally do, 'he offers me his interest and assistance, just at the moment when he knows that I can do without them; if he had cared two straws about me, why didn't he offer them to me before, and not allow me to dig myself out of the pit, and don't want his interest. I suspect I should have seen little of him if he had not heard my name mentioned in the high quarters he has done.'

"When my anger cooled down a little, I felt ashamed of my reflections on Alfred, whose conduct on this occasion, at least, had been both brotherly and straightforward. My feelings towards my mother, too, softened, 'My brother is right,' said I. 'Yes, that vile wretch, Singleton, has been at the bottom of all this; it is not likely that any parent would hate an unoffending son in her heart, as it is but too evident my mother hates me, if she had not had some plausible falsehood artfully instilled into her mind. I wonder whether Singleton is still with my mother? I must ask Wilson.' But this I forgot to do, for an event occurred which drove all these considerations out of my head, and wholly engrossed me.

"Mr. Sugden,' Jackson announced.

"'Well,' cried the former, taking a chair, and placing it near me, 'I've news for you; in the first place your brother has broken with Celini, or, rather, to speak more correctly, Celini has broken with your brother.'

"'No matter which way it was,' said I, extremely gratified at hearing this, 'so long as the intimacy is ended.'

"'Oh! of that there is not the slightest doubt,' continued Sugden, 'it occurred the day before your brother left London; it seems the Baronet objected to the lady's allowing a certain handsome young *attaché* to run about the establishment like a favourite spaniel. Celini replied that she had always been accustomed to choose her own friends, and with Sir Alfred's permission she should continue to exercise that right. Your brother remonstrated—the lady retorted—and, at last getting furious, she told your brother he might go to ——a place where there was considerably more fire than water. Your brother laughed heartily at this, and declined taking so long a journey, but expressed his willingness to part for ever from his enraged Dulcinea. The lady took him at his word, and, ringing the bell, ordered the servant to show the Baronet out of the house which his own money had

paid for. The young fellow himself told this to a friend of mine, from whom I had it. You may depend upon the information.'

"Well, my brother had broken with that Circe, that was a consolation. Napoleon's escape from Elba just then obliged me to rejoin the Duke, and I set out for Brussels on the same day that my mother and Alfred left Paris for London. After the battle of Waterloo I accompanied the Duke to Paris, where Lord G—— left me a considerable legacy, and when we went down to the frontier I had the happiness of once more joining you, my dear Stevens, and re-establishing that friendly intercourse which subsisted between us when we were cadets together at the Military College.

"I had not been long at Cambray before I received a letter from Alfred. After informing me that he had had no opportunity of again advocating my cause with my mother, he proceeded to speak in the highest terms of Lady Susan, adding 'if I could persuade myself to lead a life of shackles, I should un-

questionably select Lady Susan as my gaoler.' In my answers I expressed the great pleasure it afforded me to find that he had at last met with a lady he really liked, and entreated him to lose no time in asking her to become Lady Susan Fitzgerald, I also urged the satisfaction and pleasure he would afford his mother, who at all events loved *him*.

"It was some time ere I heard from Alfred again. 'My mother was quite right,' he observed, 'when she said that Lady Susan was precisely the person to please me. You cannot conceive what a charm I find, Herbert, in the naturalness, the *naveté* of this exquisitely beautiful girl, so totally different to the *finesse* and artificial graces—or rather I should say *paces* of the regularly bred and broken-in fillies of fashion, whom one is sick of seeing trotted out season after season at that female Tattersall's—Almack's. Oh! how immensely superior to the meretricious allurements of those foreign Circes, who are ever on the watch to take every possible advantage of the

impression they make on your feelings, or your weaknesses, without permitting their own to be engaged, or played upon for one single instant. You see Lady Susan just what she is. You read her in a moment. She hides nothing from you, because she has nothing to hide. Her face is the index of her mind. As the mutations in the heavens are pictured in a lake, so you see the lights and shadows of Lady Susan's thoughts and feelings on her charming countenance. The only fault I have to find with this sweet girl is, that she is too practical to suit my ideas. She is too fond of asking, "What is the use of this?" and leave you to attend to something she had better leave to her lady's-maid, or the housekeeper. This quality, however, which I find fault with as a lover, I have the good sense to see would prove invaluable in a wife.'

"On another occasion he wrote; 'My charming lady Susan is the admiration of every one; even Beau Brummel pronounces her perfect. I am, I think, sure of her, but

cannot make up my mind to a married life, though both our mothers wish it—my mother especially, whose health, I am sorry to see, is visibly declining. I fear she has something on her mind, but she seems as implacable against you as ever. I mentioned you to her the other day, but the subject so discomposed, and so irritated her, I was compelled to drop it. Her physicians prescribe the South of France, but she will not hear of quitting England before my marriage with Lady Susan takes place; if that is ever to be.'

"I also heard frequently from Sugden. He confirmed Alfred's account of Lady Susan, and informed me, to my no small satisfaction, that though my brother was as much distinguished for his horses, equipages, jewellery, &c., as ever, he had wholly discontinued his *petit soupers*. 'Celini,' he added, 'has gone to Vienna.'

"My brother's next and last letter simply contained these words:—

"'Come over immediately, my mother is sinking fast, and is most anxious to see you before she dies. Come instantly.

"'Yours, &c.,

"'ALFRED.'

"As you know, I lost no time in obeying the summons, but most unfortunately, owing to accidents I arrived at Portman Square half an hour after my mother's death. When I found she was actually no more, I could not help feeling deeply affected, Stevens, notwithstanding she had treated me so badly. I sent for Wilson, who came to me instantly.

"'Oh! Master Herbert,' she cried, as soon as we were shut up together. 'Why did you not come sooner? An accident! Dear me! How very unfortunate. You cannot imagine how anxious my poor lady was to see you. I never saw her half as anxious before about anything—never! She kept constantly asking whether you had arrived, and the nearer

death approached the greater became her anxiety to see you—poor dear lady!'

"'Did she say why she was so anxious to see me, Wilson?'

"'No; she said nothing about that. It was not likely she would. But I've no doubt, Master Herbert, her conscience smote her. A death-bed is a terrible thing! All the evil things we have done come rushing upon the mind, and we feel inclined to do all we can to atone for them, and set things to rights, and die in peace with all those we have injured or quarrelled with. My lady could not but have known how unlike a mother she had always behaved to you, Master Herbert; and it was natural enough she should wish to see you, and ask your forgiveness before she died, poor thing!'

"'Very true, my dear Wilson, and I shall always regret that I did not arrive in time to afford her that consolation, as I trust she did not for a moment doubt I would have done.

May God forgive her as fully and freely as I do, my good friend, Wilson.'

"'I could have told her as much, and would too, for I know it is not in your nature, Master Herbert, to bear malice against anyone, much less against your own mother, in spite of all that has been done and gone. But as my lady never alluded to the subject herself, it was quite impossible for me to do so, you know, though I can name it to you.'

"'Very true, old friend, very true; but do you know whether my mother said anything to my brother about me before she died?'

"'I can't say for certain, Master Herbert; but I suppose she did, for when my lady found herself sinking fast, and you had not arrived, she ordered everybody out of the room except your brother. They were shut up alone together upwards of an hour, but as a matter of course, I can give you no account of what passed between them, though I shall never forget your brother's countenance, and

his dreadful agitation, when he again summoned us into the room, where we found my lady at her last gasp. Five minutes had scarcely passed ere she died, poor lady!'

"'Was Singleton with her?'

"'Singleton! Dear me! No. Singleton has gone away some time since. Hadn't you heard that, Master Herbert?'

"'No; I never heard of it,' replied I, much surprised at the intelligence. 'I imagined Singleton was still in my mother's service. How long has she been gone, Wilson?'

"'Bless you! These three years and more. But hang the hussey. Don't let us talk of her. I haven't patience when I think of her and her goings on. I really believe my lady herself was afraid of her at last.'

"'How extraordinary,' I said. 'Where is my brother, Wilson?'

"'In his own apartment, Master Herbert, where he has remained shut up ever since my lady died. He takes on so, till he's quite unable to attend to anyone or anything, so

Booth and I have been obliged to give all orders, and do what is necessary. Oh! here comes Booth.'

"'How is my brother now, Booth?' I enquired.

"'Oh, terrible bad, to be sure, sir,' replied he, with a long face. 'I think Sir Alfred gets worse and worse, Wilson, instead of better. I'm very glad you've come, Major. I can't get your brother to take the least refreshment, or to let me dress him, or, indeed, to give me any answer to what I ask him, or to attend to any mortal thing, Major.'

"'I will go to him, Booth.'

"We went. I found my brother in his dressing-room. He was seated in an arm-chair, with his hands before him and his chin in his bosom, looking the very picture of despair. Man of the world as he was, and so much given up to the world, I could not have supposed he would have been so grievously affected by an event he must have been prepared for.

"'Alfred,' said I, putting my hand on his shoulder, 'Alfred, my dear brother! Look up. It is I. Herbert.'

"He made no answer, nor betrayed the slightest consciousness of my presence; so I shook him gently, and continued in a louder tone—

"'Come, come, rouse yourself, Alfred. Be a man. This won't do, you know.'

"'Eh!' cried he, starting and raising his head.

"'Thank God!' said Booth, joyfully. 'He speaks at last.'

"'Herbert!' exclaimed my brother, with a bewildered look.

"'Yes! 'Tis the Major, Sir Alfred,' pursued Booth. 'He has just arrived. Would you like to dress now, or take a cup of coffee first? You know you haven't breakfasted.'

"'Suppose you order breakfast to be brought up here at once, Booth,' said I, 'and we can take it together. I've not had refreshment of any kind since I left Calais.'

"'I'll bring it up myself,' said Booth, hastily leaving the room.

"'Calais!' repeated my brother, staring. 'Did you come from Calais, Herbert?'

"'Yes, you know you sent over for me, so—'

"'True, true. I recollect now,' he cried, hastily. 'I remember I wrote to you to come over directly, and—and—good God! it was not a dream, then,' he continued, with a shudder. 'It was not a mere phantasy of the brain—the mere offspring of a disturbed imagination, but a—a reality: and she is dead—actually dead, and—oh! horrible, horrible!' Then covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud.

"'Come, come, Alfred,' said I, still more surprised to find he felt my mother's loss so very acutely. 'Exert yourself—don't give way in this manner, my good fellow, or I shall be positively ashamed of you. The loss we've sustained is very great—greater, of course, to you than it can be to me. Still,

it's in the usual course of nature—no more than for some time you must have expected; so rouse—recollect yourself, you have duties to do, and you've me here to assist you; and I need not say, dear Alfred,' I continued, taking his hand, 'that I am both ready and willing to do so.'

"'You are good—very good,' said he, pressing my hand in return. 'God for ever bless you, my dear Herbert, for this assurance. 'Tis kind—'tis generous.'

"'Not at all generous,' replied I.

"'Oh! yes, it is most generous,' repeated he, emphatically, 'to a wretch like me, and I can never sufficiently thank you.' Then, bursting into tears, he sobbed like a child.

"I was about to comment rather severely on this unmanly weakness, when Booth brought in the breakfast.

"'The undertaker is below, and wishes to see Sir Alfred,' said Booth, in a whisper.

"'The undertaker is below, is he?' I cried, aloud, hoping to rouse my brother's energies

into action. 'Oh! very well. I'll go and give him directions, and—'

"'Stay,' cried my brother, starting up, and coming to me, "I must request, Herbert, you don't interfere. You are very much mistaken if you think I shall allow you, or any other person, to take such liberties. I'm master here, not you, unless you can prove to the contrary. I've always been accustomed to give orders in this house, and, with your good leave, will continue to do so. Booth! how dare you deliver the tradesmen's messages to anyone but me?'

"'Sir Alfred—I—thought—I—I didn't intend,' stammered Booth.

"'You thought, sir,' continued my brother, with increasing anger. 'How dare you think, sir, or presume to exercise a discretionary power in such matters? I'll let you and others know,' looking at me with flashing eyes, 'that I'm not to be slighted, or treated like a cypher, with impunity. Whatever change may have taken place; whatever

loss I may have sustained; whatever my position may be, abate one jot of that respect you've ever shown me, and you shall dearly rue for it. Go, sir,' and seizing Booth by the throat, he hurled the poor man from him with such force, that he reeled and fell upon the carpet.

"This was rousing the lion wih a vengeance, and you may be sure, Stevens, that my soldier's blood was up. But I had been accustomed to control my temper, and a moment's reflection sufficed to show me the absurdity of taking umbrage at words spoken by a brother under such circumstances. It was evident that Alfred could not be considered accountable for what he was saying and did. It was plain that he possessed more feeling than I had given him credit for, and that my mother's loss had quite unhinged him, a conclusion, I saw, Booth had also arrived at. He was about to speak, but I signed to him to keep quiet. The propriety of this soon became apparent. My brother, after chafing

to and fro for a short time, like a caged lion, suddenly came up to me and held out his hand, which I instantly took.

"'Forgive me,' he said, in a softened tone. 'God knows I would not willingly offend you, Herbert. Such madness is farthest from my thoughts. If you knew what my feelings now are—if it were possible for you to conceive what's passing at this moment in my mind you would pity me—my bitterest enemy would. Booth!' laying his hand on the poor fellow's shoulder, 'you must forgive me, too. I could not help it. I knew not what I was doing.' Then turning to me he said, 'Herbert, I am not able to talk to you now. I'll see you in the evening, when I shall be more composed. In the meantime, make yourself at home, and take some refreshment after your journey. Booth, show me to Mr. Banting,' and they went out together.

"When I came to reflect coolly on my brother's conduct, coupling it with the extreme agitation Mrs. Wilson had described

him as betraying after his private interview with my mother, immediately preceding her dissolution, I saw strong grounds for doubting that the loss of a parent, however valued, could alone have caused such disturbance of mind in a man of my brother's energies and ideas. But I had no time to debate this matter. Before evening I was seized with a sudden sickness, and felt so extremely ill, that by Wilson's advice, I went to bed, and in the evening was in a raging fever. The medical man pronounced my disorder to be small-pox, which almost immediately made its appearance, and which I had no doubt caught from a child who was suffering from this most infectious disease, in a cottage near St. Omer, in which I had taken refuge when my carriage broke down. As nobody but Jackson and Wilson were allowed to enter my room, I saw no more of Alfred, who was obliged to go to Copton Hall, to attend the funeral. He is still in the country, but has written repeatedly to

Wilson to know how I was progressing, though I have received but one short letter myself, apprising me that he had ordered Messrs. Billing and Holmes to forward me a copy of my mother's will, and expressing his regret that he had not time to say more, being up to his ears in business and law papers. The copy of the will arrived in due time, and, as I expected, I am not even mentioned in it.

"I have now, my dear Stevens, made you acquainted with my history up to the present time, and if it be not quite so full of startling incidents as some romances, it at least presents one extraordinary feature, namely, that of a son, who, for no fault of his own, has been hated, neglected, and entirely disinherited by his mother."

CHAPTER IV.

It is unnecessary to introduce Major Fitzgerald more formally to our readers. They will have gathered from the foregoing narrative he was a young man, who, by the force of his character and talents, slightly aided by his birth, had raised himself to an honourable, if not distinguished position, and that the legacy of General G——— had placed him in easy circumstances.

Fitzgerald had made the most of his opportunities. He had studied the best military works, sketched well, spoke French, German, and Spanish fluently, and had read the works of the best authors. He was ambitious, but

it was that laudable ambition which seeks to benefit others, and had as trifling an alloy of selfishness in it as was compatible with the desire.

Fitzgerald had gained a most valuable friend in Sugden, who was shrewd, clever, and persevering; a sound lawyer and honourable in the extreme.

The purer air of Hounslow soon re-established Fitzgerald's health. He had written to apprise his brother of his change of residence, and was somewhat surprised that he had received no answer, when the following letter arrived—

"Copton Hall.

"My Dear Herbert,

"I should have written sooner, but my time has been wholly taken up by the lawyers, and will be, I fear, for some time to come; so there is little chance of my seeing you in your new residence, which I very much regret, as it deprives me of the

pleasure of your society. But though so much occupied, I have not been unmindful of your interests. As the army of occupation will soon return, and a man of your energies, accustomed to the excitement of the field, would die of *ennui* at home, I have applied for an appointment for you in India, where, with your talents, backed by influence, you may aspire to anything. Flattering myself you will be pleased at this, done as it has been solely with a view of promoting your interests,

"Believe me, my dear Herbert,

"Yours affectionately,

"ALFRED FITZGERALD."

The major was both disappointed and dissatisfied with this letter. Though pleased at the prospect of a command in India, he felt that his brother ought not to have made the application without first naming the subject to him. But the pain inflicted on his *amour propre* was insignificant compared to that

which his brother's total silence, respecting his final interview with his mother, gave him. This interview he had good reason to imagine must, in some way or other, have concerned himself, else why was his mother so very anxious to see him before she died? Fitzgerald naturally was most desirous to know, what it was equally clear his brother ought, long ere this, to have communicated. Seizing his pen, therefore, Fitzgerald immediately wrote to Sir Alfred, expressing his surprise and disappointment at the latter's total silence on the subject nearest his heart, and requesting his brother, at his earliest convenience, to send him such particulars of this most solemn and important interview as it was necessary he should be made acquainted with.

"As to India," concluded Fitzgerald, "I will take it into consideration, and let you know the result. In the meantime, I am very comfortable here, and have no wish to leave England."

After posting his letter, he started off for a

long walk through the fields, and crossed the ferry. Fitzgerald had scarcely proceeded a dozen yards, when, on looking back, he saw another boat crossing the river, which was being paddled by an old man, who, to all appearance, was either tipsy, or knew nothing about the task he had undertaken; in an instant, just before the boat approached the shore, it upset, and both boatman, and a boy who was in it, were plunged into the Thames. Neither could swim, but the man contrived to clutch the boat, and was saved; the boy was carried away by the tide, which was running strong; in an instant Fitzgerald threw off his coat and boots, and plunged into the water, just as the drowning boy was sinking the second time. Fitzgerald was a good swimmer, and exerted all his energies, but before he could reach him the lad had sunk beneath the surface and it was not till after diving twice that Fitzgerald succeeded in grasping the boy's clothes. The tide, as we have said, was running rapidly, and had carried both

some distance from the shore, and it became doubtful to the persons who had collected at the water's edge, whether the former would have strength to bring his inanimate burden to land. Had the shore been a few yards further off, both would have been drowned, for Fitzgerald became nearly exhausted. The moment, however, the swimmer touched the shore, the people on the bank seized him, and dragged both him and his burden on land.

No sooner had Fitzgerald been landed than he fainted, and became insensible.

Among the bystanders was a young and beautiful lady, who, with others, had been anxiously watching the swimmer and drowning child. The moment she perceived the state of Fitzgerald and the boy, she came forward untied the neckerchief of the former and unbuttoned his shirt collar, and began chafing his head, while others attended to the poor boy, who was conveyed to his father's house, at no great distance from the ferry; it was some time ere Fitzgerald

opened his eyes, and when he did he seemed to be in no hurry to put an end to the ministration of such an angel as leaned over him. He continued to submit to the chafing of his head and hands long after the colour had returned to his cheeks, gazing all the time at his fair doctress, whose countenance he could not help thinking by far the loveliest and most intelligent he had ever seen. Nor did the lady on her part appear less struck with Fitzgerald; she regarded him with manifest astonishment, repeatedly saying to herself, in a low silvery voice, "What a resemblance! How very remarkable!"

Indeed, our fair unknown was so wholly engrossed by her thoughts, that she never perceived how carefully Fitzgerald was regarding her. The moment, however, she became conscious of this, she discontinued her labours, which were, in truth, altogether superfluous, and blushing deeply, said—

"I think he will do now, Mrs. Vickers. Bring a glass of water if you please."

Fitzgerald got up and replaced his neckerchief, and put on his boots and coat.

"I—I—beg your pardon," said Fitzgerald, when the farmer's wife was gone. "Really —I'm—I'm quite ashamed I've given you so much trouble. I am not subject to these sort of attacks, as you may suppose," continued he laughing, "but the truth is, I've just recovered from a severe illness. The water and the exertion together have been too much for me."

"The water, please sir," said Mrs. Vickers, curtseying; "if you could drink gold, and we had it, sir, I'd give it you and welcome, for we should have lost our dear boy if it hadn't been for you."

"I trust the boy has been restored to animation," said the lady.

The farmer just then made his appearance.

"Well, Vickers, I hope your upset in the river has done you no further harm than wetting your clothes."

"No, thank you, my lady, I am happy to

say it has not," said Mr. Vickers, taking off his hat and bowing respectfully to Fitzgerald. "But don't drink water, sir—don't drink water—Betsy! I'm really astonished at you! Why didn't you give the gentleman brandy?"

"I'll run and fetch him some immediately," cried Mrs. Vickers, going.

"By no means, my good lady," said Fitzgerald, returning the tumbler empty. "I very much prefer water."

"Don't say so, sir," cried both the farmer and his wife, eagerly, "because—"

"But I will say so, my good friends," interrupted Fitzgerald, smiling. "*No* is a word I've learnt to say, and I've found the lesson invaluable. Brandy would only heat me."

"It would," said the young lady, approvingly. "You are better far without it."

"I am glad you think I am acting prudently," replied Fitzgerald, bowing. "Permit me to return you my best thanks for the seasonable assistance you have rendered me."

"I was glad to have it in my power,"

she replied, gravely. "I always make it a rule to be useful whenever I can, be the occasion what it may."

"Do you?" said Fitzgerald, regarding her with increasing admiration.

"Yes, it's my code," rejoined she, smiling.

"Do all young ladies regulate their conduct by this code?" enquired Fitzgerald.

"Oh! that's a very comprehensive question," she answered, smiling again. "Let us hope many do. I can only answer for myself. I presume, judging from your own conduct, that you approve of this principle."

"Most unquestionably," rejoined Fitzgerald. "Besides, it would be very ungracious in me to disapprove of what I've been so great a gainer by. I believe there's no more to be done here."

"No, nothing, sir, thankee," replied the farmer.

"Then I'll wish you good morning," said Fitzgerald, bowing.

"Stay!" said the fair unknown, regarding

Fitzgerald with increasing astonishment. "Where are you going?"

"To Hounslow."

"Hounslow! that's a long way for you to walk in a broiling sun and wet clothes," rejoined the lady, anxiously. "You must permit me to send you home in my carriage?"

"And you?" said Fitzgerald, hesitating.

"Oh! I am at home." Pointing to a handsome house, with grounds extending to the river.

"In that case, then, I will avail myself of your offer," rejoined Fitzgerald. "To say the truth, I would rather ride than walk, under all circumstances. Besides, I'm an old soldier, you must know," added he, smiling, "and I make it a rule never to refuse a good offer;" and getting into the carriage, Fitzgerald was driven off.

"Ah! that's a real gentleman," said the farmer's wife, looking after the carriage.

"Ay, and a brave soldier, too, and knows

his business, I'll answer for it," pursued her husband.

"And what a handsome gentleman he is," rejoined Mrs. Vickers, growing enthusiastic. "I don't think I ever saw so handsome a gentleman. Did you, my lady?"

"Do you know who he is?" enquired the lady, eagerly.

"No, I don't, my lady," answered the farmer. "I don't think I ever saw him before. Did you, Betty?"

"No, never, Tom," replied his wife. "But isn't he handsome, my lady?"

The latter evaded answering this question also. Perhaps she did not hear it, for she was occupied at that moment in turning over a pebble, which doubtless possessed some remarkable geological properties. At length, looking up, she said, abruptly—

"Can I be of any further service to you, Mr. Vickers?"

"No, I thank you, my lady," returned the former, decidedly, but respectfully, "your

ladyship has been too kind to us already, physicking the children and what not."

"For which I'm sure we're heartily obliged to your ladyship," added Mrs. Vickers.

"If you should want anything," said the lovely stranger, "don't scruple to send for it," and so saying, she walked away.

Fitzgerald was much astonished when the coachman pulled up his horses at his lodgings. He had not the slightest notion that he was half way there. What in the world could he have been thinking of?

Writing with his pencil on his card, "with best thanks," he told the footman to give it to his mistress; and then, perceiving a coronet on the carriage, he enquired whose it was.

"The Countess Trelawney's, sir," replied the footman; "but it was my young mistress you saw, sir."

"What! her daughter?"

"Yes, Lady Susan."

CHAPTER V.

"LIKE Fitzgerald," exclaimed the Countess Trelawney.

"The very image of him! So like, indeed, that I thought at first it was Sir Alfred," said Lady Susan.

"How very extraordinary," rejoined her mother.

"Yes; and what makes it still more so, this gentleman was in deep mourning! Depend upon it, he is Sir Alfred Fitzgerald's brother, mamma."

"His brother, my love! You must be dreaming. Sir Alfred Fitzgerald has no brother."

"Oh! yes he has, mamma. I heard Sir Alfred mention him more than once when we were in Paris. I think he said his brother was in the army."

"You certainly must have misunderstood him, child," exclaimed the Countess. "I never heard my old friend, Lady Fitzgerald, say she had another son."

"Neither did I," said Lady Susan, "which certainly is singular. On the other hand, I am quite sure Sir Alfred Fitzgerald—"

"It's possible, very possible," interrupted the Countess, thoughtfully, "that my old friend might have strong reasons for dropping this son. He may be a *mauvais sujet*, you know."

"Very true, he may, mamma," replied Lady Susan, musing. "But I cannot think this strange gentleman anything of the kind. His appearance, manner, and sentiments forbid the supposition."

"Oh! those qualities go for nothing. Scamps are generally very gentlemenly men.

Dress and address constitute their stock in trade. I am sorry you sent him home in the carriage, Susan. He may be one of the swell mob, for aught you know."

Lady Susan thought otherwise, but contented herself with repeating her conviction that he must be Fitzgerald's brother.

"I wish I had brought down Debrett," said the Countess, "and then—"

"Oh! here's the carriage," interrupted Lady Susan. "Perhaps Sherman can tell us who this strange gentleman is."

A minute after Sherman knocked at the door and entered the room.

"Well, Sherman," said the Countess, "did you see the gentleman safe home?"

"Yes, my lady, and he desired me to give this card to Lady Susan."

"Quite right, Susan!" exclaimed the Countess, glancing at the card. "He is Fitzgerald's brother! It is a most extraordinary thing that I should never have heard of this young

man before. But here comes Mr. Pratt. Perhaps he can tell us something about the Major."

Mr. Pratt, the clerygman of———, entered the room.

"Do you know anything of the gentleman whose name is on this card?" enquired the Countess.

Mr. Pratt looked at the card, and with a smile, said—

"Yes, I know a good deal about him. Sherman tells me he is the gentleman who exerted himself so successfully in rescuing Vickers from drowning. He is Sir Alfred Fitzgerald's twin brother."

"Ah! that accounts for the extraordinary likeness, Susan," exclaimed the Countess. "There's nothing wrong about him, is there, Pratt?"

"Wrong, my lady?"

"I mean, is he admissable."

"Admissable!"

"In a word, has he done anything to lose caste. To make my inviting him here improper?"

"My dear lady," replied the reverend gentleman, smiling, "you might as well doubt the propriety of asking the Duke to your house."

"I was quite right, I knew it!" said Lady Susan, triumphantly.

"If my nephew of the Forty-Second Highlanders heard your ladyship, the house would be too hot to hold us. He swears by Major Fitzgerald. He perfectly idolizes him. They served together in the Peninsula, and Donald says the Major is the bravest man in the world—except himself, of course; and I understand the Major's character in all other respects stands deservedly high."

"And yet his mother never mentioned him, Susan," said the Countess.

"Never," echoed her daughter, who thought any mother might be proud of such a son.

"As this young man is so deserving,"

continued the Countess, "we must notice him. Situated as we are with Sir Alfred, it will be but proper, you know, Susan."

"Certainly, if you wish it, mamma," said the latter, blushing.

"Then write, and invite the Major to dine with us on Thursday, my love, to meet Lord Alwaysailing; and you and your sister must join us, Mr. Pratt."

"I shall be most happy," said the reverend gentleman, bowing, "and so, I am sure, will my sister. But the object of my visit this morning was to tell you, Lady Susan, that I have procured you a school house."

"Have you?" exclaimed her ladyship, greatly pleased, "you must tell me all about it when I have finished my invitations."

"I hope your ladyship likes The Lodge," said Mr. Pratt, when Lady Susan had left the room.

"Well, I can scarcely tell at present," replied the Countess, yawning, "we've been here so short a time, you know. But I am

much obliged to you for the trouble you have had in taking it for me. I was dying to leave town, though it's so early, for to speak truth, the season has half ruined me."

"Your ladyship will be immensely missed, leading the *ton* as you did."

"Not at all missed," rejoined the Countess, with some asperity. "Lady Overdone will more than supply my place. She has had a long experience, which, after all, is the most important point, Pratt;

"'If you'd lead,
You must feed.'

It all depends on having a good confectioner."

"I should have thought Lady Overdone's antecedents—"

"Antecedents!" repeated the Countess; "a fig for antecedents. Nobody cares for antecedents; nobody troubles his head about them. Look at Brummel; see with what slender pretensions he maintains his power! 'Tis true Lady Overdone dines off the plate

she once washed, and abuses the King's English most abominably. But do people dislike her dinners because she could cook them? or crowd less eagerly to her *soirées* because she can't pronounce the word? Certainly not. Then why should I worry myself because I cannot continue to lead such a set? I will not."

But she did. The Countess Trelawney regretted that she had lost her supremacy, and secretly cherished the hope of regaining it either by her daughter's marriage or her own.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning, as Fitzgerald was poring over "The Times," Sugden entered the room.

"I began to think I should never see you again," said Fitzgerald, shaking him warmly by the hand.

"So did I," replied the man of law, laughing, "and now I've only been able to get away by stealth. There'll be a hue and cry after me; but I've left my clerk to bear the brunt, having resolved to make holiday, and get a little fresh air before I set my nose to the grindstone again. I only wish you could see the pile of briefs on my table; it would frighten you."

"I am very glad to hear it, for your own sake as well as for the sake of your clients, and most sincerely and heartily congratulate you on the success of the great cause you've been so long engaged in. The papers are full of it; 'The Times'—"

"Oh! hang 'The Times,'" interrupted Sugden, throwing himself at full length on the sofa. "For mercy's sake change the subject. Pray don't talk shop, my dear fellow, or mention that cause in particular. You cannot conceive how sick I am of it. I have heard of nothing else since yesterday, and it was to get out of earshot of that, as much as my desire to see you, that brought me down here to-day. I verily believe if I went to the Antipodes the first thing I heard of would be Brown *versus* Jones."

"Still—"

"Ah! that's what I wish; so no more of it, 'Hal, if you love me.' You and I have had enough of lionizing. Come, if you are the sincere friend I take you to be, amuse me."

"Certainly, if you will tell me how."

"Oh! nothing is easier. Sing a comic song, or dance a hornpipe with your legs tied."

"Alas! I've neither voice nor taste for the one, nor limp legs for the other."

"Well, then, stand on your head. Believe me, Lord Chancellor Eldon, who was caught tumbling on the floor with his children, was a wise man."

"No doubt of it. You know it is not right to keep the bow always bent."

"Quite right, my friend."

"Well, as the day is so fine, what say you to go down the river?"

"And dine at Eel Pie Island. Glorious! You ought to be immortalised for your suggestion."

The day was indeed fine; a gentle breeze slightly rippled the surface of the water, and refreshed the *voyageurs*.

"This is delicious!" cried Sugden, as they slowly glided on with the stream. "The river

is beautiful, and its banks are rife with the most interesting associations."

"Who's Gothic house is that?" asked Fitzgerald.

"In that house Madame de Stael lived. A noble creature, with all her faults; I had almost said in spite of them. That was once Lady Suffolk's," he continued, pointing to an old building.

"What was she celebrated for?"

"Humph! that's a very awkward question," replied Sugden. "Horace Walpole, however, esteemed her highly. Ah! now we open Eel Pie Island."

"What a name!" exclaimed the Major, laughing.

"Yes," rejoined Sugden; "we English vulgarise everything. That dusky hole there is Pope's grotto. If one of our turtle-eating aldermen had perpetuated it, how he would have been laughed at."

"What nondescript building is that?"

"That! Oh! that's Strawberry Hill."

"What! Horace Walpole's?"

"Yes, that's the last lion to be seen here!" continued Sugden, "so you may 'bout ship, waterman. I've a strong notion that Walpole was Junius."

"Have you?"

"Yes, I have," replied the lawyer. "I think I could make out a good, a very strong case."

"Let me have an outline?" said Fitzgerald.

"Well, there are numerous passages in Walpole's letters as close, vituperate, and alliterative, as any in Junius."

"Agreed. Go on."

"Walpole, too, was in a position to know all Junius knew, and his friendship for the Duchess would account for Junius's attack on the Duke. Then Walpole spoke of Garrick just as Junius did. Oh! Walpole was Junius, that's clear; in that summer-house Gay is said to have written the 'Beggar's Opera.'"

"Do you believe it?"

"To be sure I do. I make it a rule to

believe all those sort of things. Who lives at the lodge now, waterman?"

"The Countess Trelawney, sir," replied the latter, resting on his oars.

"The Countess Trelawney?"

"Yes, sir; she's not been down here long; she's quite a stranger. They say her daughter's wery kind to the poor, physics 'em, and what not, and is going to set up a school. She's got a whole lot of scholars already."

"Lady Susan told me they intended leaving town," muttered Sugden, "but I'd no idea they were going so soon."

"You know them?" said Fitzgerald.

"Yes, I've met them occasionally, and been to two or three of their parties in Grosvenor Square. But I know Lady Susan better than the Countess; in fact we are great allies; always have a cosy chat when we meet; she's engaged to your brother, isn't she?"

"Can't say. He admires her greatly."

"Yes, that's clear. He paid her much attention last season."

"What sort of a person is the Countess?" enquired Fitzgerald. "I dine with her on Thursday."

"Have you never seen her?"

"No; and Lady Susan but once."

"Oh! then I must give you chapter and verse, I see. Lady Susan is the sweetest creature in the world, and will make a man, who knows how to appreciate her, the best wife on earth. She's domestic and utilitarian, reads much, sings exquisitely, thinks and decides for herself, but without the slightest tincture of blueism, dogmatism, or any other objectionable *ism*."

"I can believe Lady Susan to be all this," said Fitzgerald. "She reminds me of one of those lovely young quakers one sometimes sees, with her mild blue eyes and beautiful complexion. Though her air and *tournure* are incomparably superior."

"Precisely so. You've defined her exactly."

"And her mother?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Oh! her mother's totally different," cried Sugden. "I don't think she is very much different from your regular, thorough-paced woman of fashion, except, perhaps, in being more finessing, more ambitious, and more screwy than ladies of her *genre* usually are. She led the *ton* last season; but Lady Overdone's money and more liberal spreads have distanced her, and she has quitted the course in dudgeon. She's a fine woman still, and may marry yet, and will if she thinks she can regain the supremacy by doing so. Her chief object now is to make a market of her daughter; and your brother being the greatest fish in the fashionable tide, she, as a matter of course, wishes to hook him. Not a very attractive character, you will perceive."

"Very far from it," replied Fitzgerald. "I'm very vexed that I accepted her invitation."

"Oh! it will do you no harm, if you don't drink too much of her execrable port. I have

no doubt her object in inviting you is to strengthen her hold upon your brother; or to gain some intelligence from you. Oh! here's the landing-place. I hope the dinner is ready, for I have a prodigious appetite."

CHAPTER VII.

When Fitzgerald entered the Countess of Trelawney's drawing room, there was nobody there excepting the Rector and his sister. The Countess, who was as much struck with his resemblance to Sir Alfred Fitzgerald as her daughter had been, received him most graciously, and apparently with much cordiality.

"By-the-bye, Major Fitzgerald," said the Countess, drawing him out of hearing of the Rector, "when do you expect your brother will return to town?"

"I don't think he knows himself," replied Fitzgerald. "It appears from his last letter that law business will detain him for some

time to come. I am as anxious for his return as your ladyship can be."

"I see you are aware how we are situated with respect to Sir Alfred."

Fitzgerald was about to reply, when Lady Susan entered the room, with a face radiant as a sunbeam.

"I'm so delighted, mamma!" she exclaimed, "I've just been hearing that poor little crippled boy his lesson; and you can't imagine how well he has said it."

"Well, never mind the cripple now," cried the Countess, peevishly. "Have you nothing better to amuse our guests with?"

"I hope Major Fitzgerald will pardon me," said Lady Susan, turning to him with the most delicious smile imaginable. "But this poor boy is an orphan and a cripple; he is a particular pet of mine, you must know, and—"

"No apology to me is necessary," interrupted Fitzgerald, eagerly. "In my humble

opinion you could not have employed your time more advantageously."

"And I," cried Mr. Pratt, "I almost wish I had bandy-legs, or a hump-back myself to have such an instructress."

"Do you?" asked Lady Susan, laughing.

"Your ladyship knows I am as much interested in little Johny as yourself," pursued Miss Pratt.

"Oh! for mercy's sake take some other subject," cried the Countess, yawning. "The mischief of you utilitarian folks is, you will ride your hobby so unmercifully. I hope, Major Fitzgerald, you have recovered from your fatigue?"

"Oh! quite; thanks to Lady Susan."

"I hope you don't intend to faint again," said Mr. Pratt, smiling.

"If you do, I shall be happy to lend you my vinaigrette," pursued Miss Pratt.

"Thank you, but I don't imagine I shall require it," said Fitzgerald, laughing.

"Here comes Alwaysailing!" said the Countess, going to the window.

"Alwaysailing!" echoed Fitzgerald.

"Yes. Lord Alwaysailing," said Mr. Pratt.

"Don't you know him?" enquired his sister.

"Never saw him, I believe," replied Fitzgerald.

"Then you have a rich treat in store. He's a most amusing fellow."

"Yes; it's quite laughable to hear his lordship complaining of his miseries," observed Lady Susan, "possessing as he does everything on earth to conduce to his happiness. He considers himself especially persecuted by Providence."

"I see—a sworn grumbler," said Fitzgerald, "one campaign would knock all that out of him."

"In spite of his eccentricities, however, he is really a very worthy man," rejoined Lady

Susan. "His heart is in the right place, and—"

"Lord Alwaysailing!" roared the butler, throwing open the door.

"What a capital mute he'd make," whispered Fitzgerald, as a sort of lath and plaster, tall, long visaged personage, stalked into the room. His features wore the gloom of extreme discontent, except when they relaxed into a grim smile.

"I trust I have the pleasure, of seeing your lordship in good health," said the Countess.

"No, you don't, ma'am," answered his lordship, snappishly, "I'm by no means in good health—never am."

"Why, your lordship does not look ill," said Mr. Pratt.

"That's no rule," replied his lordship. "The healthiest looking man may fall down dead in a fit of apoplexy."

"Yes, that's true; but really, your lord-

ship's countenance is so clear and ruddy," said Miss Pratt.

"That's the worst of it," cried his lordship. "A friend of mine met me the other day, and when I told him I was ill, he actually said 'he didn't believe I should look pale when I was in my coffin.'"

"How shocking," said Miss Pratt.

"Yes, very," almost groaned his lordship. "That's the worst of having a fresh looking complexion. I'm certain one of these days to get an apoplectic fit."

"Oh! that's not likely; it's only stout people who have apoplexy," said Mr Pratt.

"Not likely! what, because I'm thin! That's no security whatever, for me. You don't know what an unlucky fellow I am! Things occur to me that happen to nobody else; there's always a sword hanging over my head. Ha! ha! it's really quite ridiculous. It is, indeed. Now, look here, Lady Susan," he continued, putting forth a finger, "there's

a hang-nail that's been worrying me all day long."

"I will soon rid you of that grievance," said Lady Susan, cutting it off with her scissors.

"How are your verbenas coming on, my lord?" asked Miss Pratt.

"There, again, I'm unlucky; they're all dead, Miss Pratt. Nothing prospers with me!" said his lordship, with a face like an undertaker's man.

"How was that?" inquired the Countess.

"I'll tell you," replied his lordship, breathing on his fingers. "'My lord!' my gardener said to me, 'there hasn't been a frost for a fortnight, and I think we may venture to put out the verbenys.' 'Very well,' said I, 'do it.' He did put them out, and with my usual luck, the very next morning a black frost set in. Yes, I give you my honour, a black frost cut off every one of them."

"That was unlucky," said Fitzgerald, much amused.

"Unlucky, sir! Eh! Isn't this Sir Alfred Fitzgerald?"

"No, his brother; Major Fitzgerald," replied the Countess.

"Sir, glad to meet you—I took you for your brother. Happy to see you. But I'll tell you another abominable thing that happened to me, Lady Trelawney."

"What was that?"

"You remember my buying a horse, last spring, at Tattersall's, Pratt? Well, I gave two hundred guineas for him, down. I'd some doubts about his knees at the time, and I said so. 'My lord,' said Tattersall, 'he has the finest knee in the world.' 'The *ne plus ultra*,' said Theodore Hook, who was close to me. But in spite of the warranty and Hook's pun, the very first time I mounted him he came down with me, and my head went smack into a hod of mortar that the bricklayer was using. Now, I'll be bound to say, I am the only unfortunate wretch in the world that such a thing would have happened to."

"It was very unfortunate, assuredly," said the Countess, with difficulty restraining her laughter.

"Unfortunate!" echoed his lordship, angrily. "I think there can be no doubt about that, when I had to have my head shaved, and wear a wig; I could not get that confounded mortar out of my hair anyhow, and when I began to wash it, the lime burnt my hair. Upon my life, I believe everything, animate and inanimate, is leagued against me."

"I hope not," said Miss Pratt.

"I'm convinced of it," pursued his lordship.

"What makes you think so?" said Lady Susan.

"I don't think it, I know it," rejoined his lordship, with the air of a man who had completely settled the point. "It's as plain as the sun at noonday. If I want to go anywhere very particularly, it's certain to rain. Yes! and if I want it to rain ever so much, it

won't. Then, again, if I go to the opera or to a concert, I'm sure to be placed in a horrible draught, which cuts me across the loins and gives me the lumbago or the tooth-ache. Yes, and so unfortunate I am, that I verily believe that if I turned shoemaker, people would be born with wooden legs, just to spite me."

At this moment, dinner was announced.

CHAPTER VIII.

LEAVING the gentlemen over their wine, Fitzgerald went into the grounds, and joined Lady Susan, who was seated alone on a rustic chair. She started and blushed at Fitzgerald's approach; for she happened at that moment to be thinking of him. He had sat next her at dinner, and she had been much pleased with his manner and conversation.

"Pleasant house, this," said Fitzgerald, seating himself.

"Yes, very," replied Lady Susan. "I was delighted when mamma decided on taking it, for I have a great objection to London."

"So have I," pursued Fitzgerald, "I al-

ways feel like a fish out of water in it. I have no fancy for a forest of chimneys, or a villa on the shady side of St. James's Street; and am always glad to get away into the green pastures."

"Exactly my case," said Lady Susan. "Neither my tastes nor habits fit me for a London life. Last season was my first, and I can assure you that I got heartily tired of it before it was half over."

"I know something of that trial," said Fitzgerald. "I once ran the gauntlet of the *salons* myself, and odd as you may think it, was a lion!"

Lady Susan did not think it odd in the least, but she didn't say so; she thought she had seen some lions who resembled those noble animals far less than the individual beside her.

"Not but what London has its attractions," observed Lady Susan. "I am charmed with the opera, for instance."

"Are you a lover of music?"

"Yes, of good music."

"And so am I."

"One meets, too, the celebrities of the day in London. I was much pleased with Moore and Walter Scott; the latter especially. The simplicity of his manners, and the wholesome vigour of his mind, seemed like an oasis in the desert of frivolity around me. I was also much pleased with a Mr. Sugden, a lawyer."

"My most intimate friend," exclaimed Fitzgerald, delighted at her ladyship's declaration. "One of the best fellows in the world, and exceedingly intelligent."

"He seemed so," replied the lady. "Accident threw us several times together, and I soon discovered that he was very much superior to that common herd, which forms the aggregate of fashionable society."

"He is equally pleased with you."

"I'm glad to hear it. Mr. Sugden is one of the very few people I met in London with whom I am anxious to stand well. You have seen much service, Major Fitzgerald?"

"Yes; and am likely to see more. My brother has proposed my going out to India, and I incline to do so, but am in no hurry to leave; I would rather see a little more of my native country now I am in it."

"Are you partial to a soldier's life?"

"Yes; I think it a profession in which a wise and humane man may effect much good. Look at Wellington."

"Ah! Wellington! But every commander is not a Wellington!"

"No; would they were. Napoleon and his Marshals, with some rare exceptions, were little better than brigands. But though a baton forms the obelisk at the end of my vista, there's a smiling background in the distance, on which imagination loves to dwell. Visions of an easy shooting jacket sort of life, in a picturesque domain of one's own; married, of course," continued Fitzgerald, laughing, "surrounded by little ones and pets about me, and a few select friends, refined, but not fussy. Now, in such a position as this," concluded

Fitzgerald, earnestly, "with a little hunting, and a little shooting, and a little fishing, and plenty of books, doing all the good one could, and making oneself generally useful, I should envy no one."

"Nor need you," said Lady Susan, with emotion. "You have described Paradise."

Here the smartest of *soubrettes*, with the smallest of ankles, tripped like a fairy across the lawn, and addressing Lady Susan, said—

"Please, my Lady, Susan Vickers has come for some medicine for little Tommy, but Mrs. Watson doesn't know what to send him."

"What ails the child?" inquired her ladyship.

"Susan cannot tell, my lady; she says he's so feverish and so fractious, that they don't know what to do with him."

"I'll see the child myself," said Lady Susan, rising.

"I thought you would, my lady," said the *soubrette*, "so I brought your bonnet and shawl."

"You will excuse me, Major Fitzgerald," said Lady Susan, putting on her bonnet and shawl. "The fact is I take great interest in these Vickers. Mr. Pratt assures me they are very worthy people."

"I can readily believe it," answered Fitzgerald. "I was much prepossessed by Vickers's look and manner, and should like to see more of him. Will you permit me to be your escort."

"With pleasure," said Lady Susan, taking his proffered arm, and they proceeded to the farmer's together.

"I like that Major," muttered the girl with the smallest of ankles, looking after them. "He has a heart. He's worth a hundred of his brother, who cares no more for us poor people than he does for a dog—nor yet so much."

On their arrival at the farmer's, Lady Susan went up stairs with Mrs. Vickers to see the child, while Fitzgerald remained in the parlour below. Little Robert Vickers, who was roll-

ing on the floor, got up, and after staring at Fitzgerald with his large grey eyes, gradually nestled up to him and climbed upon his knee.

"Get down, Bob," cried his sister, a nice-looking girl of sixteen, who was working at the window. "How dare you take such a liberty with the gentleman? Come to me directly."

"Let him be," said Fitzgerald, "I like children, and Bob knows it, don't you, my little fellow?"

Bob grinned, and clung closer to Fitzgerald.

"I am glad the ducking your father and brother had yesterday has done so little injury, Miss Vickers," continued Fitzgerald, hugging the child.

Eliza made no reply, but went on with her sewing for a few minutes, then said—

"Bob, take your hand out of the gentleman's pocket directly. You had better put him down, sir, you'll find him very troublesome."

"No, no, let him remain," said the Major, laughing, "I'm not disposed to part with my new friend, Bob, so easily."

Eliza was silent; but she burst into tears, and throwing down her work, leaned her head on the table, and sobbed piteously.

"There! go play in the kitchen, Bob," said Fitzgerald, putting the child out of the room; and closing the door, he entreated Eliza to be composed, and disclose to him the cause of her grief.

"I will, sir, I will," said the poor girl, drying up her tears. "You are so kind, sir, I feel somehow that I could tell you anything; but for God's sake, sir, don't let father know that I mentioned a syllable of the matter, or he'd never forgive me."

Fitzgerald assured her that he would not, and Eliza proceeded—

"You must know, sir, that after father had given the men who helped him out of the river, some beer yesterday, he went up-stairs to change his wet clothes, and feeling

in one of his pockets in which he had the cash and bank notes he meant to pay the last half-year's rent with—"

"Well," said Fitzgerald.

"Well, sir, I went upstairs after him, and when I got to the landing-place, I heard father say, 'good God! what will become of us; the notes are all stolen, and we shall be turned out in the street to starve, for I don't know the number of any of them,' and throwing himself on the floor, he took on terribly, as I could see from where I was standing."

"Go on," said Fitzgerald.

"Well, sir, I stole downstairs again without his seeing me, though I was scarcely able to stand, and my heart was fit to break."

"Where is your father?" enquired Fitzgerald.

"Gone to London, I believe, sir," replied the poor girl, crying, "but for what purpose I cannot say, for he has not said a word to any of us about losing the notes."

"What's the amount?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Father had forty pounds in notes, sir," answered Eliza.

"When is the rent due?"

"Oh! it's over due, sir, and the landlord has sent to say he must be paid early to-morrow. I'm sure I don't know what's to be done," pursued Eliza, despairingly, "for the landlord is a very hard man, and father has such a spirit, he'd rather starve than ask anyone to lend him the money. Oh! dear, I wish I had died, before I'd allowed Tommy to get into that horrid punt."

Here the unhappy girl was called into the kitchen, and Fitzgerald seeing an inkstand on a table, hastily wrote a cheque, and enclosed it in a sheet of paper, sealed and directed it to Mr. Vickers. He had scarcely placed the note on the mantel-piece, when Lady Susan and Mrs. Vickers entered the parlour.

"I am afraid little Tommy is going to have the measles," said Lady Susan, as they returned to The Lodge, I've sent Eliza for the doctor."

"Where have you been all this time, Susan?" demanded the Countess, angrily, as her daughter entered the drawing-room, with Fitzgerald.

"At Farmer Vickers', mamma. His boy is taken ill, and—"

"Susan," said her mother, angrily, "are you not over doing this? Young ladies of your rank are not expected to play the 'Lady Bountiful' at all hours. For heaven's sake sing something, or we shall never get through this stupid evening."

Lady Susan seated herself at the piano and sang a plaintive air from memory, the words of which we give:—

"Fare ye well, bright days of gladness,
Girlhood's sunny hours, farewell;
Mine is now the heart of sadness,
Mine the griefs I dare not tell.

Yet, though deep the pangs of sorrow,
Though oft heaves the bitter sigh;
Hope still gilds the coming morrow,
Joy, though clouded, still is nigh.

Soon these darksome clouds shall vanish,
Soon shall joy resume her sway;
Swiftly all this sorrow banish,
Soothe, and drive these griefs away."

"What a doleful ditty," exclaimed Miss Pratt.

"Doleful, indeed," cried the Countess, yawning; "how can you sing such rubbish, Susan!"

"The author must have been very miserable," pursued Mr. Pratt.

"Or very bilious," said Fitzgerald, laughing.

"Not at all bilious," cried Lord Allwaysailing, snappishly; "he was miserable, of course—very miserable—who isn't. I should like to have a copy of that song, Lady Susan."

"In the meantime give us something lively," said the Countess.

"Yes, pray do," urged Miss Pratt, eagerly; "that depressing song has left me an octave too low."

Accordingly Lady Susan dashed into a piece of Mozart's with a spirit and *abandon* that exhilarated even Lord Allwaysailing.

"Oh! wonderful Mozart!" exclaimed Miss Pratt. "He's never out of fashion; we never

get tired of his compositions. Do pray, my dear Lady Susan, favour us with a little more of his divine music."

"Here's *La ci darem*," said Lady Susan, turning over the leaves. "Will any one join me? Will you, Lord Alwaysailing?"

"I can't," replied his lordship, dolefully; "I never sang but one song in all my life, and that was when I was a boy at Harrow."

"What was that?" asked the Countess.

"'I am a brisk and sprightly lad.' I couldn't sing it now," added his Lordship, sighing.

"Major Fitzgerald, will you take the second?" asked Lady Susan.

"I will do my best," answered he, walking to the instrument.

"Bravo!" cried Mr. Pratt; "no man can do more."

Fitzgerald had a rich, manly voice, and as he thoroughly understood the composer, he called forth all Lady Susan's powers, which were great.

"Why, Major Fitzgerald!" exclaimed Miss Pratt, breaking the silence which had followed their performance, "you are positively an Orpheus. Where in the name of wonder did you learn to sing Mozart so divinely?"

"I learnt to sing him 'so divinely,' as you are pleased to express it, in Portugal, Miss Pratt," replied Fitzgerald, laughing. "I happened to be billeted in the house of a lady who had resided several years at Vienna, and knew every note of the great master. Of course I was only too happy to have such an instructress as Donna Angelina."

"I presume the lady was as pretty as her name?" said Miss Pratt.

Lady Susan's eyes asked the same question.

"I'm sorry to disappoint your romance, ladies," replied the Major; "but Donna Angelina was fat, fifty, and a grandmother. She was a most excellent person, however, notwithstanding, and I should be ashamed to tell you how much affected I was when we parted."

"I had my pocket picked the last time I saw *Don Giovanni*," observed Lord Allwaysailing, in a sorrowful tone.

"Sad indeed," said Mr. Pratt.

"Nothing more than my usual luck," rejoined his lordship, with another melancholy smile.

"I hope you did not lose much?" said the Countess.

"Only a ten pound note, two guineas and a sixpence," replied his lordship, "but I'm almost sure the sixpence was bad!"

"You bit the thief there," said Mr. Pratt.

"Oh! but I met with another accident that same day," cried his lordship, with something akin to animation, "you never heard of such a thing."

"Eh! what was that?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Why, you must know," continued his lordship, clutching Fitzgerald by the button, "you must know, sir, my Scotch agent happened to be in London, so I went to see him in his lodgings, in Craven Street, off the

Strand. Well, I put my hat on the only chair in the hall, or rather passage, and went up stairs; whilst I was there the poulterer's boy came with some eggs, the servant took 'em from him just as the door bell was rung furiously, and the girl, in her hurry to answer the summons, put the eggs into my hat. Well, down I came, and being rather pressed for time, clapped my hat on my head without looking into it, crash went the eggs, and in an instant, yes in an instant, I give you my word, I was as yellow as if I'd had the jaundice!"

"I hope you were soon delivered from the yoke," said Mr. Pratt.

"That is a pun, sir," cried his lordship, disdainfully. "I hate a pun as much as Dr. Johnson did. I shall begin to suspect you are the fellow who picked my pocket. Good night, ladies."

"You are not going?" said the Countess.

"Yes, I am, the moon's up, and if I stay till it goes down, I shall go down too, for I'm

such an unlucky dog that my coachman will be sure to upset me in a ditch. Good night, good folks; happy to see you at my place, Major Fitzgerald," and away his lordship went.

Mr. Pratt and his sister also took leave, and Fitzgerald was preparing to follow, when the Countess, calling him aside, said—

"Come often to see us, as I said before dinner. You are aware, I suppose, how Susan is situated with regard to your brother?"

"Not exactly," replied Fitzgerald. I have been so long out of England that—"

"I thought your brother might have spoken to you on the subject," interrupted her ladyship. "Sir Alfred's attentions to Susan were so pointed before your mother was taken ill, that I fully expected he would have made her an offer; so it's natural I should feel anxious for his return, you know."

"Quite so," replied Fitzgerald, and bidding Lady Susan good night, took his leave.

The moon was at its full, and Fitzgerald strolled slowly along. The house he had just

left was visible among the trees, with the flowing river at no great distance.

"How happy I could be in such a pleasant place," thought he, "with such a wife as Lady Susan will make. Alfred is a lucky fellow. But I am afraid he will not appreciate her."

By a singular coincidence, Lady Susan's thoughts ran at that moment in a similar direction, as she contemplated the scene from the window of her *boudoir*.

"What a paradise this would be!" soliloquised she, "with a congenial spirit. What a pity it is Sir Alfred does not resemble his brother as much in mind as he does in person!"

And what were the Countess's cogitations?

"I wish this state of things was put an end to," thought she, as she retired to her dressing-room, "and Sir Alfred had actually made Susan an offer."

CHAPTER IX.

On returning from his walk the next day, Fitzgerald found that Lord Alwaysailing and Mr. Pratt had called. The following morning he returned their visits, and then proceeded to The Lodge. The Countess was intently reading a flaming account of a *bal costumé* at Lady Overdone's.

"What wretched bombast! what fulsome stuff!" she exclaimed, throwing down "The Morning Post," in which paper she had always been nervously anxious to have her own parties mentioned.

"Thank heaven I'm out of it, for, after all, such entertainments are a thousand times more trouble than pleasure."

"I always thought so," said Lady Susan, who was looking over a parcel of children's books.

"I know you did, my dear," pursued her mother, "and you were right—quite right. I see it now; my eyes are opened; I see it now. It is an absurdity exhausting one's resources, and throwing open one's doors to a crowd, in which, perhaps, no one cares a straw about one, or would experience the slightest emotion if they read one's name in the obituary. I will never give such parties again; I am quite determined."

"I don't see any amusement in them, I confess," said Fitzgerald. "For my part, I have no wish to attend such fruitless meetings. I am certain there must be tenfold the enjoyment in the society of a select few who—"

"To be sure," interrupted the Countess, opening a note the butler had just brought her. "To be sure; just such a gathering as we had the other evening, you know. That's

the most sensible sort of thing. All else is vanity and vexation of spirit, and I do assure you, in all sincerity, my dear Major, that if I were commanded to the royal table at this moment—humph—what's this? Lady Mary Blissful at home—*dejeuner la fourchette*—all the world going. I think we may as well go too, Susan."

"Why, considering it's all vanity and vexation of spirit, mamma—"

"Well, so it is, my dear, so it is. But you needn't be so smart upon me. I've not the slightest wish in the world to go, not the slightest; but Lady Mary is such a particular friend. I should not like to affront her, and as her villa is only at Hampton, just across the way, as I may say, we will look in for an hour or two, and Major Fitzgerald shall escort us."

Fitzgerald had just signified his assent to the proposition, when Lady Germain was announced.

The lively old lady lived at Germain House

in a style suitable to her rank, and had known Horace Walpole personally.

"I could have sworn you were a Fitzgerald," said she, when the Major was introduced to her; "I knew your father well, and you are very like him."

Fitzgerald's eyes filled with tears, as he said—

"You knew my father."

"Yes, and your grandfather, too," rejoined Lady Germain. "I was staying at Copton Hall when I was a girl."

"I'm told it's one of the finest residences in England," said the Countess.

"The finest, the very finest," pursued the old lady. "It stands better than Blenheim, and the state apartments are superior. I recollect a very singular discovery was made at Copton Hall while I was staying there."

"What was that?" enquired Fitzgerald.

"Why the workmen, on removing a large press, discovered a door opening into a small, dusky room nobody knew was there."

"Ah! the 'Black Chamber,'" said Fitzgerald. "So your ladyship was there when that was discovered."

"Why was it called the 'Black Chamber?'" enquired Lady Susan.

"Because it was entirely hung with black cloth," replied Lady Germain. "It contained an altar with several half burnt tapers on it, besides a mass book and a human skull. The whole county rushed to see it."

"How came the room in such condition?" asked the Countess.

"A former baronet, then only a second son, went out shooting with his elder brother, whom, by some mischance, he mortally wounded," replied Fitzgerald.

"A lucky accident for him," observed the Countess.

"He did not think so," said the Major, "for he never forgave himself. He had this little room, which was his oratory, fitted up in the manner described by Lady Germain, and on the anniversary of his brother's un-

timely death, completely shut himself up, there for the day, which he passed in penitence and prayer."

Lady Germain took leave, and Fitzgerald finding Lady Susan was going to her school, accompanied her. On their return they met Farmer Vickers.

"How's little Tommy?" enquired Lady Susan.

"Oh! purely—purely, I thank your ladyship," replied the farmer, respectfully. "The doctor says he will do now, if so be he doesn't catch cold. But asking your ladyship's pardon for taking the liberty of stopping you, my business is with the Major here."

"With me?" said Fitzgerald.

"With you, sir," rejoined the farmer, bowing. "I'm come to return this cheque here, which you were so good as to leave at my house for me t'other evening, when—"

"Well, well; we will talk of that some

other time, Mr. Vickers," interrupted Fitzgerald, hastily. "Just now—"

"No time like the time present, sir," persisted the farmer, still holding out the cheque. "I thank you for your very great kindness and generosity, from the bottom of my heart, sir. I do, indeed, but—"

"Pray, Mr. Vickers," urged Fitzgerald, again colouring deeply.

"You really must excuse me, Major, if I insist on giving you back the cheque," persisted the farmer, with increasing earnestness. "I don't at all want it, sir. I don't, indeed; or I'd rather be beholden to you than I would to any gentleman I ever saw in the whole course of my life."

"Are you sure, quite sure, Mr. Vickers, that you don't want the cheque," said the Major, still hesitating to take it.

"I am, indeed, sir, I am; I do assure you, sir," replied the farmer. "I haven't the slightest occasion at all for it. I got the

numbers of the notes that were stolen from the gentleman of whom I took them, and the Bank has made them good; so that, in point of fact, I've sustained no loss at all, sir."

"In that case," said Fitzgerald, "I'll take back the cheque. I'm neither so rich, nor so quixotic as to force money on those who do not stand in need of it."

"And no man of independent spirit," replied the farmer, "likes to put himself under an obligation to another, however good that other may be, if so be as he can by any ways help it; and now that matter is off my mind, I'll go and feed the pigs." So saying, he made Fitzgerald and Lady Susan a very low bow and left them.

"I doubt whether Sir Alfred would have acted thus!" thought Lady Susan, as they walked back to The Lodge, in silence.

At length, the day appointed for Lady Mary Blissful's *dejeuner* arrived, to the great joy of the Countess, who, truth to tell, began to miss the bustle and excitement of the

London season woefully. The sun, contrary to his custom on such occasions, proved in the best possible humour, and not a cloud obscured the heavens. Lady Mary's villa was one of the prettiest imaginable. The grounds of velvet verdure, interspersed with *parterres* of the choicest exotics, were washed by the Thames. A military band played the most enlivening airs, while the company either lounged, stretched themselves on the turf, reposed on garden chairs, caught gudgeons, or fed the swans, until their own feeding time arrived, which was impatiently expected by all.

The first person the Countess saw was Theodore Hook, lolling on a garden chair; while a swarthy, well-bearded personage, dotted down in his note book what Theodore dictated.

The Countess tapped Hook on the shoulder. He started up in alarm.

"What's the matter?" cried the Countess. "I only tapped you on the shoulder, Mr. Hook."

"And a very awkward place to be tapped on, too," cried the wit. "I mistook your ladyship for a bailiff."

"Did you?" said she, laughing.

"I did—as I hope to—to meet my little bill on the twenty-third. Delighted to see your ladyship. Heard you had gone into the *Trappe*, instead of which you've *gone on the turf*, I see, which is better than cutting it."

"Bailiff!" echoed the swarthy personage, jotting it down. "What's zat?"

"Live in this land of liberty, my dear friend," replied Hook, "and you'll soon know. He'll pop you into prison in a jiffy."

"Ah? *chef de police*, I see," rejoined the swarthy personage, noting it. "*Parbleu!* in France dey shut up all de good peoples zare in Chateau D'If."

"Ah! Much virtue in *if*," said Theodore, sighing. "They shut up the good people here, too, sometimes, my dear friend."

"Meaning yourself, I suppose," said the Countess, laughing.

"Well, I am good—good for nothing," retorted the punster. "I'm like a duck—keep my head above water one minute, and the next go down. My merits are many and *divers*. But wrong can't be made right," added Hook, with a bitter sigh.

"Present me," said his friend.

"This is my friend, Louis Favre," said Hook, complying. "He's a great *savant*, and a great fool. He has come over to England to collect *materiel* for a book on our manners, customs, &c., &c., and will be very grateful for any nonsense you give him."

"If your ladyship shall be so good," entreated the Frenchman, pulling out his note book. "Monsieur Oake has already supplied me with some very valuable *materiel*."

"Allow me," said the Countess, anxious to see this.

"*C'est ca!*" rejoined the Frenchman, pointing to the passage, and the Countess, who could scarce conceal her laughter, read as follows:—

"Greek and Latin languages derived from the English, *vide* Swift. The Irish have tails, seen Mr. Dan O'Connell's. Welsh rabbits, on the contrary, have no legs—consult Offley. In Scotland men wear petticoats—their wives the breeches. Cannibalism not wholly extinct. Maids of Honor are still eaten at Richmond, &c."

"You surely won't let him publish this?" whispered the Countess, as she returned the Frenchman his note book.

"Every syllable!" replied Hook, "and as much more, if he's donkey enough to do so. The fellow, with all his enthusiasm, intends abusing us, while he avails himself of our hospitality."

"Surely," urged the Countess.

"I tell you he deserves no mercy," interrupted the relentless wit. "I know this fellow well."

"I pity him, Mr. Hook," said Lady Susan. "His necessities prevent his doing justice to

the great talents he no doubt possesses. He shines in society."

Here Lady Mary came up, leaning on the arm of her son, Colonel Blissful.

"You're very full," said the Countess, after exchanging compliments.

"Yes," replied Lady Mary, "and I expect to be fuller. You're sure Brummel will come?"

"He said he would," answered her son, who was petting an Italian greyhound. "Down! Corinne. I met him yesterday, in Pall Mall, when he told me he was going down to the office to insure his life before venturing on so dangerous a journey."

"Brummel!" echoed Fitzgerald. "Is that fellow still alive?"

"Hush!" whispered Lady Susan, who was leaning on his arm. "You are talking treason! If they hear you calling Mr. Brummel a fellow, you will be taboed."

"I must be more cautious, I see," said Fitzgerald, laughing. "But what bold

Amazon is that, who wears her bird of Paradise with so defiant an air? Do you know her?"

"But too well," exclaimed Lady Susan, nervously. "It is Lady Overdone."

"Lady Overdone! Sugden mentioned her."

"She's the wife of a banker lord," rejoined Lady Susan, "who married her from the kitchen. Her inexhaustible purse gains her immense influence, in spite of her antecedents. She has acquired the conventionalities of fashionable life; but makes the most egregious mistakes when she uses words and phrases she does not understand, as she is perpetually doing."

"Wishes to appear refined, eh?" said Fitzgerald.

"Exactly so," rejoined Lady Susan; "a common fault with underbred people."

"Has she any family?" asked Fitzgerald.

"One daughter, the Honourable Miss Tomkins. I don't see her here, or all the crows

—I beg pardon—all the beaux would be about her."

"A distinction without a difference," said Fitzgerald, laughing.

"But Lady Overdone hates mamma," continued Lady Susan, apprehensively, "and they never meet without sparring. I dread the collision."

"Suppose we get out of the crowd," suggested Fitzgerald, "on these occasions discretion is the better part of valour."

"I should certainly like it," replied Lady Susan, hesitatingly; "mamma has too much spirit to avoid Lady Overdone, and it only distresses me to—"

"This way then," said Fitzgerald.

And without further debate he led her to a vacant seat near the river.

"How do, Lady Mary?" cried Lady Overdone, who by this time had worked her way to the Pavilion. "Nice little place this of yours; I like it vastly. Sorry my daughter

couldn't come. She's got a cold, and Overdone is up to his eyes on the Currency Question."

Then seeing the Countess, who was in conversation with Colonel Blissful, she exclaimed—

"What! Lady Trelawney! This is an unexpected pleasure. Then you are not gone into the *Grand Chantreuse?*"

"*Char*-treuse, I suppose your ladyship means," returned the Countess, who made a point of exposing her rival's blunders on every opportunity.

"Well, *Char*-treuse then," cried Lady Overdone, colouring through her rouge; "it's all the same, I s'pose, isn't it?"

"Not exactly," said the Countess, drily.

"Well, we can't all be so learned as you, you know," rejoined Lady Overdone, with a loud laugh.

"Who told you I had turned trappist?" asked the Countess.

"Who? Why, Brummel, to be sure; you

know his way. He said you had had your head shaved, lived on bread and water, dug a bit of your own grave every day, and slept in your coffin."

"And why should I do all this?"

"Because you were *cocoa.*"

"*Ro*-coco, you would say."

"Yes, doubled up and put by, as Charley Coventry calls it."

"Does Mr. Brummel say I'm *ro-coco ?*"

"No, he doesn't, it's only his fun; but everybody's very much surprised at your ladyship's leaving town in the height of the season."

"I don't see why they should trouble their heads about it."

"No more do I ; but they will. People will talk, you know, and the general opinion is that you've retired to economize."

"Oh ! to economize, eh ?"

"Yes, to economize; but Charley Coventry said you've no need to shuffle off to do that, as you were always 'screwey.'"

"I am very much obliged to Charley

Coventry, and to your ladyship for repeating it."

"Oh! you're very welcome, I'm sure; but I can't tell you how disappointed I was at not seeing your ladyship and dear Lady Susan at my ball."

"It would be difficult, indeed."

"Oh! it went off so gloriously, you can't think," continued Lady Overdone. "Three Royalties, besides two foreign Princes, and Brummel; and I wore my splendid diamonds, worth a hundred thousand pounds! Everybody declared *non con.*—"

"*Nem. con.* you mean."

"Well, *nem. con.*, that it was the finest thing of the kind they had ever witnessed. I'd *patés* from Strasburg, stewed lampreys from Worcester, hock a hundred years old, which cost thirty shillings a bottle, and a *knavery* of singing birds."

"An *aviary* you mean."

"It doesn't signify which, only the nasty obstinate little things wouldn't sing. The

Prince declared I had managed the supper admirably."

"It would be heresy to doubt it," replied the Countess, whose whole soul was on fire; "and I can assure you, dear Lady Overdone," continued she, smiling and taking her hand, "that I am a staunch believer in your proficiency in all matters relating to the *kitchen!*"

Pulling caps might have followed this home thrust if Brummel had not fortunately made his appearance at the nick of time.

"Delighted to see you," said Lady Mary. "I hope—"

"Hope nothing!" interrupted Brummel, sinking on a chair; "I'm past hope. Give me *sal volatile* somebody! I shall never survive it!"

"Survive what?" said Colonel Blissful.

"My journey hither," replied Brummel, with a shudder. "God forgive you, Lady Mary, for enticing me into this barbarous expedition! I'm choked with dust! shaken into a jelly! dislocated into chaos! Praying

for me at all the churches won't save me! I crossed an extensive waste called Farnham Common, where the aborigines drink porter out of pewter pots! Horrible! horrible!"

"Don't you ever drink porter yourself?" asked Lady Overdone.

"What! malt!" exclaimed Brummel, with a look of great disgust. "Your ladyship might as well ask me if I eat horseflesh, or dance a jig, or breakfast at eight o'clock, or do any other outlandish thing! Oh! for mercy's sake, Bounty, tell that fellow not to bang that big drum so unmercifully; it positively excruciates me!"

"How do you feel now?" asked the Countess.

"What, Lady Trelawney! Have you turned up again. We were going to have you cried. In what cave, 'dug by no mortal hand,' have you been hiding yourself?"

"In no cave at all, Mr. Brummel. You'll fancy me a toad in a block of marble next!"

"What better could I fancy you?" replied the beau, sighing. "I'm sure I often wish I was one, or a snail."

"Why a snail?" inquired Lady Mary.

"Because he's so independent," replied Brummel. "Because Nature has been so peculiarly kind to the snail. I beg you'll listen to me, good folks, for I'm going to be very instructive."

"Go on," said Colonel Blissful, "we're all attention."

"I say then," proceeded Brummel, gravely, "that Nature has been peculiarly provident to the snail. She has provided him with a house, rent free, which never wants repairs, and which he can move from parish to parish before quarter day, so the tax-gatherers can't come upon him for rates and taxes; besides, snails have no tradesmen's bills, or appearances to keep up, consequently they needn't be afraid of being dunned, and can draw in their horns without alarming their creditors.

But your toad in a block of marble has the advantage, he wants nothing."

Here the gong sounded, and everyone hastened to the marquee, in which the *déjeuner* was laid out.

CHAPTER X.

The spread proved in all respects most satisfactory. It is extraordinary with what zest people devour cold chicken under canvas, which, if served up hot at their own tables, they would have eaten with comparative indifference. For some time nothing was heard but the clatter of knives and forks, intermingled with the popping of beer and champagne corks.

Fitzgerald, who had enjoyed a most delightful stroll with Lady Susan, fanned by refreshing breezes from the river, was seated beside his fair charge, with Lord Alwaysailing on

his left, and Theodore Hook and his French friend for his *vis-à-vis*.

"Delightful grounds these," said Fitzgerald to Lord Alwaysailing.

"Glad you find them so," growled his lordship. "I sat down on a wasp's nest, and don't find them delightful at all."

"Mr. Brummel, I've a favour to ask," said Lady Overdone.

"Nothing in the album way, I hope," cried the beau, apprehensively. "I never got beyond half a couplet in all my life."

"And what was that?" asked Colonel Blissful.

"Gad! I forget. I know it ended in dell, but as the only rhyme I could think of was Pall Mall I gave it up."

"Well, you needn't be alarmed," said Lady Overdone, "I only want you to show me your nicnackery and *bull* tables. Charley Coventry says your house in Chesterfield-street is full of *virtue*."

"Of course it is when I'm at home," replied

between two flanking towers, surmounted by the Fitzgerald arms, now nearly obliterated.

"*Tempus edax rerum*," said the surgeon, passing into the park.

The road gradually descended into a deep rocky ravine, through which a brawling stream foamed and fretted its angry course over a stony bed, and then turning sharply to the left, was lost among the woods. Macdonald paused for a moment on the handsome stone bridge which crossed this stream, and looked around him. It was a spot of rare beauty, and connected with associations which brought tears into the surgeon's eyes; for well he remembered taking a walk here the last Sunday he had been in England, with one whom he had dearly loved and since lost.

From the bridge the road wound up the opposite side of the ravine, between high craggy banks, crowned with large forest trees, whose huge branches almost shut out the daylight by the denseness of their foliage. Macdonald felt a chill come over him as he

toiled up this gloomy defile, and he involuntarily quickened his pace, as though the Book of Fate had been opened to him, and he felt anxious to escape a spot which was so soon destined to prove fatal to himself. He felt not a little glad when he left the gloomy ravine and emerged into the sunshine, and saw before him the eminence on which stood Copton Hall, which, with the exception of Imperial Windsor was excelled by no other baronial residence in England. Like most edifices of this description, it was an accumulation of epochs, from the time of the Conquest down to the Third George's reign, when the grand banqueting hall was added. The habitable part bore no proportion to the size of the building, which was chiefly appropriated to a dreary range of state rooms, which were seldom used; a long ballustraded terrace, on which some half dozen peacocks were trying to mar the effect of their beauty by screaming hideously, ran along the principal façade. This terrace commanded a prospect rarely

met with for beauty and picturesque grandeur, even in the lake district; Derwentwater, with its lovely islands, lay like a polished mirror below, reflecting in its unruffled surface, rocks and groves and villas, and thickly wooded knotts, and mountain peaks, in all the rich variety of nature in her most lavish and capricious moods, while on the valley beyond the enraptured eye rested on Lodore, with Castle Craig, and the stupendous precipices of Borrowdale, backed by Scawfell, uprising in sullen majesty. The tears ran down the cheeks of Macdonald as he contemplated these familiar and fondly cherished scenes of his boyish days, and it was with difficulty he tore himself from their contemplation, to enter the edifice by a side door with which he was well acquainted.

CHAPTER XI.

"I POSITIVELY must give Sir Alfred warning, Mrs. Bonsor," said Booth, as he sat sipping his wine with the housekeeper. "His temper has become unbearable."

"You are quite right," said Mrs. Bonsor, with a sigh. "It's bad enough for us, but how you, who are always with him, can stand it, is really surprising."

"I can do it no longer, Mrs. Bonsor," rejoined Booth, filling his glass, "and that's the sum and substance of it. I don't want to leave him if I can help it, for the situation is a capital one, and to give Sir Alfred his due, he has not been a bad master, that I can and

will say for him. But when nothing I can do gives him satisfaction, Mrs. Bonsor, I think you will agree with me that it is time to leave his service."

"Very true, Mr. Booth," pursued the housekeeper. "I'll just take a thimbleful out of your glass. As you say—"

"I can't imagine," interrupted Booth, "what the deuce has come to him. He was always tremendously peppery, but now—"

"Perhaps it's his losses!" said Mrs. Bonsor.

"Well, theyv'e something to do with it, no doubt," resumed Booth. "But Sir Alfred has never been the same person since his mother's death, Bonsor. The Major and I had the devil's own work with him then; it was as much as we could both do to keep him right. He took me by the collar and gave me such a swing, I hardly knew how to keep my monkey from rising, I can tell you, Bonsor."

"What kind of person is the Major?" asked Mrs. Bonsor.

"Oh! he's all very well," replied the valet, carelessly. "But he hasn't a bit of style or fashion about him. I question if he ever bought a bottle of *eau de Cologne* in his whole life; in fact, Bonsor," he added, pulling up his cravat, "he's not one of us."

"Don't you think, Mr. Booth, that it was very strange his mother did not leave him a rap."

"Well, it was strange," replied Booth, "but her ladyship was a terribly hard woman."

"The hardest I ever met with," said a strange voice, "but she couldn't bully me—she couldn't bully me."

"Now, who the deuce are you," thought Booth, rising and eyeing Macdonald, who had entered the room unperceived.

"Don't disturb yourselves," said the surgeon, seating himself and gasping for breath. "Sit down again, or I go. The door was open—saw nobody—knew the way—slipped upstairs, and here I am. Sir Alfred's gentleman, I presume?"

"I have that honour," replied Booth, resuming his seat. "Pray whom have I the pleasure of—"

"Why, I do really believe it's Mr. Macdonald!" exclaimed the housekeeper, looking at him in astonishment.

"To be sure it is, old girl!" rejoined the surgeon, laughing, "as large as life! Glad to see you again—very. Give me your hand. Ha! ha! ha! Some years since I felt your pulse, Mrs. Bonsor."

"You may say that, Mr. Macdonald," replied Mrs. Bonsor. "It's more years—"

"Than you care to own. Eh?" interrupted Macdonald, smiling; "and yet you wear well—extremely well, Mrs. Bonsor; should never have supposed you near so old as of course I know you are—never."

"Well, and if you come to that, Mr. Macdonald," pursued the housekeeper, "you are not looking so much amiss yourself."

"Well, I don't think I am," replied the surgeon, grinning, "when you consider I've

been roasting all this time under a burning sun, though they will have it otherwise, the fools! and insisted on sending me home; but I believe I shall live a good many years to plague the Company yet."

"Oh! you're from the East, are you, sir?" said Booth.

"Yes, regular Bengalee," answered Macdonald. "I've been there eight-and-twenty years; it's an infernal country, though. Tries a man if he is not very careful. Lots of cholera, cobra capellas, and jungle fever; to say nothing of sun-strokes. Sun takes you smack, and you're done—all over with you—nothing to do but bury you, ha! ha! The old place looks much as it did; scarcely altered, Bonsor."

"No; more new faces than anything else, Mr. Macdonald," replied the housekeeper. "That's where the principal alteration is."

"Suppose so," said the surgeon. "Old Lady Fitzgerald gone, I find. Well, she behaved very well to me—very well indeed

—nothing to say against her—very ungrateful if I had. Hope she's happy!"

"I hope she is," said Bonsor, with a sigh.

"What's become of Sam, the helper," enquired the surgeon; "you remember Sam, Mrs. Bonsor?"

"To be sure I do, quite well, Mr. Macdonald; you cured him of that bad arm, you know. Sam's dead!"

"Ah! poor Sam; sorry to hear that—not a bad fellow, Sam. What did he die of?"

"Rather an awkward complaint;" replied Booth. "He was hanged at Preston for horse-stealing."

"The deuce!" exclaimed the surgeon; "sorry to hear that; better have died of bad arm. There was Bill, too—Bill Spring, the under gardener—what's become of him. Was he hanged too? Hope not."

"No. Bill was only transported," replied Bonsor. "He got fourteen years for stealing melons and pines and selling them at Whitehaven."

"Why, what an infernal set you had about you!" cried the surgeon. "After this I'm almost afraid to enquire after Singleton; she isn't hanged or transported, is she?"

"No," answered Bonsor, "Singleton escaped, though she deserved hanging or transporting as much as either of the others. Singleton's married and gone to Australia."

"Why, what makes you so bitter against Singleton," enquired Macdonald. "What did the poor woman do?"

"Do!" echoed Bonsor, "why bullied and tyrranized over us all, till we hated the very sight of her; indeed, Singleton took such liberties with my lady herself, at last, that she was glad to get rid of her, at the expense of five hundred pounds, which she gave her as a marriage portion."

"You astonish me!" cried Macdonald. "Could not have believed it of Singleton; she was such a meek, quiet creature; you would have thought butter would not have melted in her mouth when she first came to

Copton Hall to be wet-nurse, and received the twins from me, when I delivered my lady."

"Oh! you were the medical man on that occasion, were you, Mr. Macdonald?" said Booth.

"Yes, I was," replied the surgeon, "for want of a better. Dr. Leatham couldn't attend, so it all fell on me. I did not like the responsibility. I was very young then—couldn't be helped—obliged to go through—did—and luckily so much to my lady's satisfaction that she took me by the hand, and gave me my appointment."

"That's Sir Alfred's bell," said Booth, going. "Shall I tell him you're here, Mr. Macdonald?"

"If you like," answered the latter, "no objection, though Sir Alfred does not know me."

"You'd better, Booth," said the housekeeper; "Sir Alfred might consider it disrespectful if Mr. Macdonald went away without your taking his name up."

"If you think that, do it by all means," said the surgeon; "though I have no wish to force my company upon the Baronet—nor as far as that goes, on any other person."

"Yes; it's better to tell Sir Alfred that you're here," said Booth, leaving the room.

"Can I offer you any refreshment, Mr. Macdonald?" said the housekeeper.

"Eh? no, I thank you," replied the surgeon, going to the window. "By Jingo! there's a shower! how it does come down!"

"Yes; you couldn't leave the Hall now, if you felt disposed to do so," pursued Mrs. Bonsor. "Perhaps you'd like to go over the state apartments, and see the Black Chamber, Mr. Macdonald?"

"Thank you; I should like to see them again very much," replied the surgeon. "I've often thought of them in India, and Borrowdale, Skiddaw, the eagle's nest, and the rest of 'em. Precious home-sick out there sometimes, I can tell you, Bonsor."

While the preceding dialogue was going on

in the housekeeper's room, the owner of the mansion was at anything but at his ease.

The apartments occupied by the Baronet were those which the late lady, his mother, had moved into on the tragical death of her husband. They were antiquated and sombre, being situated in the older and retired portion of the building, for which reason, no doubt, they had been selected by her ladyship, as being best suited to the then unhappy state of her feelings. The drawing-room, which was small, was lighted through an oriel window, richly emblazoned with heraldry. A portrait of her ladyship, when about seventeen, hung over the mantlepiece; pictures by old masters were distributed over the walls. The furniture, however, was modern, with the exception of one or two richly-ornamented cabinets. This apartment opened into a bed-room, with a small dressing-room within it; a second door gave egress to a small staircase descending into the private garden which abutted on the woods; while a third and larger

door led into the grand picture gallery, which contained pictures by the most eminent painters, among which were family portraits by Holbein, Vandyke, Lely, Kneller, &c., &c.

Though the weather was tolerably warm, the Baronet sat crouching over a fire in his dressing-gown and slippers. His whole appearance showed that he had a mind ill at ease, and his pale, haggard face, gave indication of bodily ailments. His hair and beard were neglected, his shirt collar was open—in fact, he presented a striking contrast altogether to the hitherto brilliant Sir Alfred Fitzgerald, whose toilette was the very pink of fashion, and whose bearing was generally so haughty.

"That chill again!" he exclaimed, shivering and hitching his chair closer to the fire. "I never felt anything like it before; and no wonder, for I never was in such an awful fix. Dolt! idiot! madman!" continued he, starting up, and pacing the apartment, "that I—I, of all men, should have fallen into such a

trap! I shall never be able to go into society again—never."

"And you too—you!" soliloquised the Baronet, pausing before his mother's portrait, "I could almost find it in my heart to curse you—though you meant me well. I shudder when I think of our interview on your death-bed." Here he sank into a chair, and putting his elbows on his knees, buried his face in his palms. "But I'd got over all that—taken my stand—had the way straight before me, when—"

His soliloquy was cut short by the entrance of Booth.

"How now, sir," exclaimed the Baronet, "what brings you here? I didn't ring."

"Mrs. Bonsor said you did."

"Curse Mrs. Bonsor!"

"Well, Sir Alfred—"

"But it is not well. Why the devil do you stand there, when you've been told you are not wanted."

"I only waited to tell you, Sir Alfred, there's a Mr. Macdonald below."

"Macdonald!" echoed his master, "who the devil is Mr. Macdonald. I don't know any such person."

"Probably not, Sir Alfred. He left England soon after you were born. He was formerly medical attendant at Copton Hall, and came to see Bonsor; but as he was a great favourite with my lady, your mother, I thought you would he angry if I allowed him to leave the Hall without letting you know he was here."

"Then you thought wrong, sir, as you generally do," rejoined Sir Alfred, pettishly. "You know I see nobody but Billing. You must be either drunk or dreaming to have forgotten it."

"I'm neither the one nor the other, Sir Alfred," replied Booth, "and since I can't give you satisfaction, I'd better quit your service."

"Certainly, sir, by all means, this minute,

if you like," retorted the Baronet, fiercely. "What! you think I can't do without you. But you'll find yourself mistaken. You think you can frighten me into raising your salary, do you?"

"Sir Alfred, you do me great injustice," said Booth, reddening. "I've no such ideas. But when nothing I can do or say is right, I think it's time for me to —"

"How, rascal! dare you answer me?" cried the Baronet, enraged.

"I'm not a rascal, Sir Alfred," retorted the valet, losing his temper, "and I'll not allow you or any man to call me so. Curse me if I will!"

"Why, you impertinent scoundrel!" vociferated the Baronet, starting up. But the excitement was too much for him, and he fell back in his chair in a fainting fit.

"Hallo! there, Benjamin," bawled Booth to the footman in the ante-room. "Run down into Mrs. Bonsor's room, and ask Mr. Macdonald to come up here as quickly as possible."

"The gentleman's in the state apartment with the housekeeper," said the man.

"Quick, man; and tell them both to hasten here without a moment's delay."

"I wish I'd bit my tongue off," pursued Booth, "before I'd answered him. But he was so cursed provoking, flesh and blood couldn't stand it."

At this moment Macdonald and Bonser entered the room.

"He's dead!" exclaimed the latter, wringing her hands.

"He's no more dead than you are, you foolish woman," cried the surgeon, feeling the Baronet's pulse, and then baring his bosom. "Give me that handkerchief. Holloa! what's this?"

"What's what?" enquired Booth.

"Humph! no matter now," muttered Macdonald, binding up his patient's arm, and opening a vein.

Presently the blood began to flow freely, and the Baronet opened his eyes.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Booth, with a deep sigh.

"Don't talk, Sir Alfred," cried the surgeon, perceiving that the Baronet was about to speak. "The quieter the better. You'll do very well, but you must go to bed now. Take my arm—that's it!" Having assisted Sir Alfred into his chamber, and ascertained who was his medical man, Booth set off for Dr. Allman, at Keswick, to report what had happened.

CHAPTER XII.

It was upwards of ten days ere Sir Alfred could leave his room, and when another week had elapsed Macdonald again made his appearance at the hall. He eagerly asked to see the Baronet, and it was evident from his manner that he was both fatigued and excited, if not in positive pain.

"You had better rest yourself a bit, Mr. Macdonald," said Bonsor, "and take some refreshment before you see Sir Alfred."

"No, no, no occasion for it," replied Macdonald, gasping for breath, and putting his hand to his heart. "I must see the Baronet instantly."

"You'd better take a glass of sherry first," persisted the housekeeper.

"No, no, I tell you; don't want it; not the least occasion for it," returned the surgeon pettishly. "Show me up, Mr. Booth."

In five minutes Macdonald was ushered into the Baronet's room.

"Be seated, Mr. Macdonald," said Sir Alfred. "I am very glad of this opportunity for thanking you for the assistance you so promptly rendered me the other day. In giving you the fee, usual on such occasions—"

"Pooh! never mind that, Sir Alfred," interrupted Macdonald, refusing to take the guinea. "We won't talk of fees. I'm no longer in practice. I want to have some very serious talk with you. I have come on purpose. I have a very important and a very distressing duty to perform."

"How so!" said the Baronet, surprised.

"How things came to be in this state, Sir Alfred, I can't explain," pursued the surgeon, panting for breath. "All I know is they are

so, and however much I may lament the necessity of giving you pain, I must do so—can't shirk it, Sir Alfred."

"Pray come to the point at once, Mr. Macdonald," said the Baronet, "whatever communication you have to make, the sooner you do it, the better."

"I quite agree with you, Sir Alfred," rejoined the surgeon, "always think it best to be frank and truthful with my patients—always—it's the best way—then there is no necessity for beating about the bush—go at it smack—when they must know the worst—better tell 'em at once—can do all that's requisite then, and be prepared for it; and this is your case at present."

"Proceed!" said the Baronet, impatiently.

"You must know then, Sir Alfred," resumed Macdonald, "that I was the medical man who had the honour of bringing you and your brother into the world."

"Indeed!"

"Fact, Sir Alfred, as Bonsor and Wilson,

and many others know, and Singleton, if alive, can prove."

"Well, sir," said the Baronet, looking very pale.

"Well, Sir Alfred," pursued Macdonald, earnestly, "one of those twins, by nature's vagaries, was marked with the figure of an oak tree, just above the left breast here, as, of course, you are aware, Sir Alfred; and on my return home, after delivering my lady, I made a memorandum of the fact, not that such phenomena are uncommon, but because in this case it was of the very gravest importance to be sure which of the twins it was that was so marked. Now, you are *not* that twin, Sir Alfred," continued Macdonald, significantly, "for I saw your breast the other day; and here—here is the memorandum I made," added he, pulling out a small red memorandum book, and pointing out the passage. "No, I'll not let it out of my hand; but you can read it, Sir Alfred. How things got into this state," continued the surgeon,

carefully putting the memorandum book into his pocket again, "of course I can't say, nor do I suppose you can have been aware of it; but there is a fault somewhere, that's clear. The memorandum and its correctness I'll swear to. The book, together with all my other documents, and papers, have been in Messrs. Billing and Holme's custody, sealed up with my seal, during the whole time I was in India, and I only broke open the packet this morning after my return from London, as my sister can testify. Now, Sir Alfred, I need not tell you," continued Macdonald, thumping the table with his fist, "that only one course is open to us, as men of honour, and we must adopt it instantly—instantly."

Sir Alfred eyed Macdonald for some time in silence, then starting up, seized the surgeon's arm, saying—

"Walls have ears!" and walked him into the bed chamber, and closed the door carefully.

Presently their voices were heard in high altercation, and Macdonald burst into the

room again, followed by the Baronet, exclaiming—

"Don't tell me! I won't hear a word—not a syllable. I have heard too much already!"

"But, my good sir," cried the Baronet.

"Don't good sir me," continued Macdonald, foaming at the mouth, "you're a rascal! and I leave you. What! insult me, John Macdonald, by such an offer! Let me tell you, Sir Alfred, you've mistaken your man, when you—"

"But listen, Mr. Macdonald," urged the Baronet, "don't be so hasty. When you calmly consider my proposal, I flatter myself—"

"You do flatter yourself if you think I'm to be swayed for a moment by any such considerations!" interrupted the surgeon, furiously. "The India Company couldn't bribe me; no, nor the Bank of England to boot. I shall act for myself. Let me see," continued he, pulling out his watch, "past three—time

enough to write to the Major. I'll see Billing and Holmes immediately. Let me go, you scamp! Pah! I'm disgusted with you!" And breaking from the Baronet, the surgeon dashed out of the room.

"A pig-headed brute!" exclaimed the Baronet, extremely agitated. "Who'd have thought of his turning up? But I am out of luck every way. If he writes to Billing, or sees him, all will be lost. How shall I parry this cursed thrust? I see but one course—I'll take it."

And he rang for Booth.

"Booth, how did Mr. Macdonald come?"

"On foot, Sir Alfred."

"Alone?"

"Yes, Sir Alfred."

"Good! He has greatly fatigued me, and I must lie down on the bed. Don't let anybody disturb me till I ring."

"I'll take care, Sir Alfred," said Booth, going.

And the Baronet went into his bed chamber.

In about two hours the Baronet rang again.

"Has anybody wanted me, Booth?" enquired he, yawning and stretching himself.

"No one, Sir Alfred."

"That's well," cried the Baronet, gaily.

"You seem in high spirits, Sir Alfred," said Booth, smiling; "your nap has done you good."

"Yes; I feel a good deal better every way, Booth," replied his master. "I shall dress. I was very harsh to you the other day. There is something in compensation."

"Thank you, Sir Alfred," said the valet, pocketing the bank note. "I was very wrong, too. I will take care that such a thing does not happen again. You must forgive me, Sir Alfred."

"Let us say no more about it," rejoined the Baronet, going into his dressing-room.

"Now, behave yourself, my fine fellow," soliloquized Booth, following, "'or else,' as Cassio says in the play, 'I have thee on the hip.' Coming, Sir Alfred."

CHAPTER XIII.

Sir Alfred Fitzgerald was about to seat himself at the dinner table, when a loud noise arose in the hall.

"See what noise that is," said the Baronet.

The butler went out, and in a few minutes returned, saying—

"The head keeper wishes to speak with you, Sir Alfred, immediately."

"Is his business so very pressing?" asked the Baronet, tossing off a bumper of sherry.

"Yes, it is, Sir Alfred," rejoined the butler. "Joscelyn says he must see you directly."

"Let him come in, then."

The keeper was accordingly ushered into the dining-room.

"Well, what is it, Joscelyn?"

"I'm sorry to say I've very bad news for you, Sir Alfred," replied the keeper, considerably agitated; "but the gentleman who was here this morning—"

"You mean Mr. Macdonald," said the Baronet.

"Yes, Mr. Macdonald, Sir Alfred. He is dead!"

"Dead!" echoed his master.

"Yes, Sir Alfred, quite dead," said Joscelyn. "I was going my rounds just now, and as I got down into the hollow way between the high rocks, I found Mr. Macdonald lying on his back in the middle of the road."

"Good heavens! how shocking!" exclaimed the Baronet. "Why, he left the Hall in perfect health, only three hours ago. Joscelyn, are you sure he's dead?"

"Oh! quite sure, Sir Alfred," returned the keeper. "I felt his heart. He's quite stiff already."

"Good heaven! how shocking—how very

shocking! What have you done with the body, Joscelyn?"

"Nothing, Sir Alfred. I thought it best to leave it where it was, and come up here for orders."

"Then we must go and bring it in immediately," said the Baronet. "Is there any mark of violence about it?"

"None, whatever, Sir Alfred," replied the keeper. "'Tisn't likely there should be."

"Very true," said his master, thoughtfully. "It is not likely that, in my park—"

"Of course it isn't, Sir Alfred," interrupted Joscelyn. "He must have died from a fit, or something of that sort, depend upon it."

"At all events, we must bring in the body," pursued the Baronet, "and send for the doctor."

Accordingly, Sir Alfred, accompanied by several servants, immediately followed the keeper to the spot where the body lay. As Joscelyn had affirmed, no marks of violence were visible on the deceased, whose watch,

purse, and memorandum book were still about his person, and duly handed over to a constable, who had by this time arrived.

Sir Alfred attended the funeral, to the intense gratification of Miss Macdonald, and the admiration of the whole neighbourhood, who were never tired of praising the Baronet's condescension and goodness of heart on this melancholy occasion.

"Now for action!" said Sir Alfred, on his return from the funeral. "I've no time to lose. I must prepare for Lady Susan Trelawney. This marrying is a confounded bore. But 'needs must when the devil drives.' I must get rid of *him* too! His presence in England is intolerable. I cannot endure it!"

Having thus resolved upon his plan of procedure, Sir Alfred wrote three letters, with the contents of which the reader shall, in due time, be made acquainted.

CHAPTER XIV.

We must now take our readers with us to the South, and see how matters are progressing there. Major Fitzgerald, it will be remembered, had just received a letter from Sugden, which ran thus:—

"——— Court.

"My dear Fitzgerald,

"I have just learnt, from undoubted authority, that about three weeks ago, Lord S——, with W—— and Y——, looked in upon your brother. High play ensued, and during the week the party remained at Copton Hall, your brother lost

more than the unentailed property left him by his mother. No doubt this was a preconcerted plan to pigeon your brother, who has won from S—— and W—— largely. I think it right that you should know this, and intended to have communicated it *viva voce;* but term is drawing to a close, and I am literally overwhelmed.

"Yours in haste,

"C. SUGDEN."

Fitzgerald's indignation was intense.

"To indulge in this degrading vice at any time, is bad enough!" he exclaimed, in high wrath; "but to do so, when his mother was scarcely cold in her grave—that mother who had loved him so dearly—who accumulated, so carefully, for his own especial benefit that wealth which he has squandered so wantonly—so recklessly—displays such an utter want of all common decency, and all proper feeling, that it is fortunate for us both, perhaps, that Alfred is not within reach of my resent-

ment. And why," continued he, with unceasing indignation, "why doesn't Alfred answer my letter? Why doesn't he afford me the information I have a right to expect from him? His losses do not prevent his doing that. I am disgusted with him—disgusted every way!"

But Fitzgerald soon forgot his brother's disgraceful and unaccountable conduct in his increasing intercourse with Lady Susan Trelawney, whom he sometimes saw at the Lodge and the Parsonage; but far more frequently when the Countess was absent. It is astonishing what sympathy there was in their movements, what a similarity in their pursuits. If Lady Susan visited a sick villager, Fitzgerald was sure to be there too. If she went to the school, Fitzgerald was certain to be there before her. Did she drive to Hampton Court alone, or stroll out by the river side, Fitzgerald was ready to hand her out of the carriage, or to offer her a bouquet of forget-me-nots. His propinquity was magical! In

short, it became a matter of course at last for Lady Susan to find her arm linked in his the moment she left the Lodge; and what was more extraordinary, Sir Alfred Fitzgerald's name never passed their lips. His very existence seemed forgotten. If it was so, they soon had a reminder.

One morning going into breakfast, Fitzgerald found a letter from his brother on the table.

"At last!" he exclaimed, opening the missive. "Now I suppose I shall get my questions answered."

But, as he read, a frown came on his brow, and his cheek paled. It was evident the contents of his brother's letter did not please him.

"So he has made Lady Susan an offer, has he?" exclaimed Fitzgerald, biting his lips, "and seems sure of success. Well, it's not more than I expected—and yet—I can't conceal it from myself—it disturbs me more than I could wish. Is it possible I've been in a

fool's paradise all this time? That my affection for Susan exceeds brotherly feeling. It is so. I can't shut my eyes to the fact. It must be remedied. Yes, I must see Lady Susan no more," continued he, after a pause. "I will do nothing that may mar her prospects. Her fortune will more than clear off my brother's embarrassments. What does he say about India? Let me read it again. 'Things in Calcutta present so splendid a prospect to an officer of your reputation and talents that, without waiting any longer for your decision, I intend writing to B—— by to-morrow's post, to appoint you to something in India immediately; so you had better put in an appearance at the Horse Guards without loss of time.' Yes, I will see Susan no more," he continued, after a pause; "Alfred is right, and I will do so. The sooner I leave England, the better. But, most extraordinary, he doesn't say a word about his last interview with my mother, although I entreated he would do so."

Fitzgerald then wrote to the Countess, thanking her for the attention she and Lady Susan had shown him, and apologising for not taking leave of her ladyship personally, on the plea of pressing military business. Giving this to his landlady to forward, he ordered Jackson to pack up, and in less than six hours, had established himself in the first floor of a house in Berkley Street.

Let us take a peep into the domestic affairs at The Lodge.

The ladies were at breakfast, when the butler brought in the letter-bag as usual.

"At last!" exclaimed the Countess, joyfully, pouncing on a letter with a large black seal. "From Sir Alfred Fitzgerald, my dear!" Then opening it, she took out another letter, and handed it to her daughter, saying, significantly, "For you, Susan. I hope the contents will prove agreeable; but let me read mine first, my love."

"My dear Lady Trelawney,

"Give the enclosed to Lady Susan. It contains a formal proposal, a little too soon, perhaps, for *les etiquettes;* but love breaks down all barriers—excuses all solecisms. My charming Lady Susan knows how anxious my dear mother was to effect a union between the two families. She knows, too, how ardently I love her. Your ladyship still wishes it; and this wish I flatter myself will not render Lady Susan less favourable to my proposal. I enclose a memorandum of my rent-roll, and Billing will meet your solicitor at any time and place he appoints, to arrange about settlements, &c.

"Yours very sincerely,

"My dear Lady Trelawney,

"Alfred Fitzgerald.

"Direct to me, Portman Square."

"Then Sir Alfred's coming up?" observed the Countess.

Lady Susan made no answer. Her eyes

were fixed on the Baronet's proposal, which she still held, unopened, in her hand.

"He must be coming up immediately," pursued her mother. "Are you not glad of it, my love?"

"Glad of what, mamma?" said Lady Susan, drawing her hand across her brow.

"Why, of Sir Alfred's coming up to town, my love. You do not appear to know what I am talking about."

"Oh! yes I do, mamma—I—"

"Then why don't you open your letter, child; I should have thought you would have been impatient to know what Sir Alfred says —I am."

"I think, mamma," said Lady Susan, drawing a deep sigh and blushing; "I think I'd rather read this letter by myself."

"By all means, my love, if you're so sensitive," replied the Countess, laughing. "I'm sorry this proposal should have spoilt your breakfast, though it is nothing more than we've looked for. Go up into your boudoir,

and when you've recovered from the dreadful shock of finding a baronet wishing to cast himself at your feet with a rent roll of thousands a year, I'll join you."

"Very well, mamma," said Lady Susan, hurrying out of the room.

Lady Susan felt considerably relieved when she found herself alone. Sir Alfred's proposal had stunned her. Why was this? Why had a marriage with Sir Alfred become so repulsive to her feelings? She had not long to seek the cause.

When the baronet was first introduced to Lady Susan she had thought him by far the handsomest man she had ever seen, and her fancy immediately invested him with all those moral qualities she most valued. But each succeeding interview weakened this impression, and when accident made her acquainted with Major Fitzgerald the baronet sunk to zero in her estimation.

With Fitzgerald the reverse was obtained. The more Lady Susan saw of him the more

she admired him; in fact, he proved all both in person and mind she had imagined his brother to be. The result is obvious; Lady Susan loved Major Fitzgerald, and the discovery overwhelmed her.

"Good God!" she exclaimed, "have I then given my affections, unsought, to a man I can never marry? and, what is infinitely worse, I must refuse the man my mother's heart is fixed on. I cannot, dare not, must not go to the altar with Sir Alfred. My principles as well as my inclinations forbid it; and yet to disappoint my mother!"

Here Sir Alfred's proposal, which lay on the table unopened, caught her eye.

"I must read it," continued she, shuddering; "it is no more than his due."

And taking up the letter, as if it were an adder, she broke the seal. The envelope only contained a formal proposal, and she had just finished its perusal when her mother entered the boudoir.

"May I read it?" asked her mother, taking

the paper from Lady Susan, and without waiting for permission she ran her eye eagerly over the contents, and then tossing the letter on the table, continued—"well, this is all very right, very satisfactory, my dear. You accept him, of course. But what are we to do about settlements? I know no more about those sort of things than the man in the moon. I suppose we must leave that to the lawyers."

Perceiving that Lady Susan continued silent, the Countess proceeded—

"We must take care that your interests are properly secured, my dear; that your allowance be proportioned to the large sum I mean to give down with you, my dear. Is there any particular clause now you wish to have inserted respecting schools on the estate, and that sort of thing? Because now you know is the time to see to it. You can't think how happy the prospect of your marrying Sir Alfred makes me, my dear child," added the Countess, taking out her handkerchief.

"My dearest mamma," replied Lady Susan, greatly agitated, "it cuts me to the heart to be obliged to give you this pain; but I cannot marry Sir Alfred Fitzgerald."

"Not marry Sir Alfred Fitzgerald!" echoed the Countess, in intense astonishment.

"No, indeed, mamma," rejoined Lady Susan, much relieved by this confession; "it is utterly impossible I should ever do so."

The Countess bit her lip.

"Susan," said she, after a pause, "I know you too well to suspect you guilty either of affectation or coquetry; or that you are acting without what you consider a sufficent reason for coming to a determination so extraordinary, and so unexpected. But you must excuse me, my dear, if I say that your conduct looks very like caprice—to use the mildest term. Why, I never heard you utter a syllable that led me to suppose you intended to refuse Sir Alfred."

"Perhaps not, mamma, for I never knew till it came to the point how repugnant to my

feelings and principles a union with him would be."

"Why, you admitted when he was first introduced to you that his person was unexceptionable."

"I did so, and hoped, knowing how anxious you were for the connexion, to have found him equally estimable in all other respects; but—"

"But what?"

"I am sorry to say it, mamma, the more I saw of Sir Alfred Fitzgerald, the less I liked him, and it is notorious that his conduct in some important points is anything but unexceptionable."

"If you never marry until you meet with a Sir Charles Grandison, Susan—"

"Besides, we differ totally in our tastes and habits," continued Lady Susan, with increasing earnestness. "We have not a single idea in common—not one, mamma! and a union between us could only be productive of unhappiness—certainly to me."

"Trite and Utopian!—trite and Utopian!" exclaimed the Countess, with a sneer. "I've no patience with such nonsense; who ever dreams of a congeniality of tastes and habits in our sphere of life? I should have thought, even with your limited experience, Susan, that a person of your observation must have seen this."

"As a general rule I fear you are right, mamma," replied her daughter, "but I have seen many exceptions to it, and I hope if I ever become a wife, my marriage will prove one too, or I would rather, much rather not, marry at all. I feel that unless my husband and myself were animated by one spirit I should be miserable; and this would certainly be the case if I married Sir Alfred Fitzgerald, my dear mamma."

The Countess' brow grew darker.

"A little less logic and a little more duty," she said at length, "would become you better, Susan. What! Have my wishes no weight with you? Have you so little regard

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for my views—for your future welfare? Have you no respect for my long experience of the ways of the world, that you oppose my will, and without reflection or hesitation refuse an offer that you are well aware has been the cherished wish of my heart. I thought you had more love for me, Susan," and again the Countess had recourse to her handkerchief.

"Oh! my dear mamma, do not think so harshly of me," cried Lady Susan, taking her mother's hand. "If what you ask me involved anything in the world but the utter wreck of my earthly happiness, I would not for a moment object."

"Then, promise me, Susan," said the Countess, who was too well versed in woman's ways not to see that she would not gain her point by prolonged discussion, "promise me that you will, at least, reconsider this matter carefully, before giving me your final decision?"

Most reluctantly was this promise given by the daughter, and the mother left the room.

"Who could have foreseen this!" exclaimed the Countess, as she hurriedly entered the breakfast room; "I was never so surprised in my life. Never! The worst of it is, that when Susan takes a thing into her head there's no driving it out again. I don't know what has come to young women now. They really pay no respect to their parents' opinions, but meet you, as Susan did, by talking of congeniality of tastes and habits, and such like nonsense, I—"

A servant knocked at the door and entered the room.

"A note my lady."

"Who from?"

"Major Fitzgerald, my lady. A little girl has just brought it," and handing the note to her mistress, left the room.

"How vexatious! how extremely annoying!" exclaimed the Countess, after reading the note. "One would think his Satanic majesty had got into everything. I shall begin to be of Lord Alwaysailing's opinion,

that fortune's in a conspiracy to thwart and annoy me! Here's the Major ordered away on military business, at the very moment I should have been so glad of him to speak to Susan in his brother's favour. Besides, he might have been of such essential service to me with regard to the settlements, and other law business, for I am determined Susan shall marry Sir Alfred, or it shall be the worse for her."

In the meantime, Lady Susan, like a sensible girl as she was, tried to drive away unpleasant thoughts by the best of all methods—occupation; so she went down to the housekeeper's room, and began regulating the bill of fare, when the parlour maid rushed in, exclaiming—

"Oh! my lady, such bad news; and I'm sure you'll be as grieved to hear it as we all are. The Major's gone!"

"Gone!" echoed Lady Susan, amazed.

"Yes; to Hingey," replied the girl, "to fight the whitey-browns, and we shall never

see him again in this world, poor dear gentleman, for the butler his sartan sure they'll kill and beat 'im dead, my lady, for Jackson told me that his master was always in the thickest of it, when any fighting was going on."

"How do you know that Major Fitzgerald has left England?" said Lady Susan, sinking into a chair.

"Oh! there's not the least doubt of it whatsumnever, my lady," rejoined the girl, wiping her eyes with her apron. "I wish there was. The Major received a letter this morning, and went off in a pochay, as fast as the horses could tear along, and his landlady's in such a way about it. Her little girl, who has brought a letter for the Countess, has just told us all in the kitchen. The poor child's fit to cry her eyes out, for the Major used to call her his little wife, and was so kind to her, as indeed he was to everybody—high and low for that matter, poor, dear gentleman!"

Lady Susan regained sufficient composure

to return to her boudoir, when she gave free vent to the feelings which oppressed her. But her well-disciplined mind soon regained its equipoise; pride and delicacy came to her support; her reason taught her that everything had happened for the best.

"His sudden departure has spared the pain of leave-taking," said she; "and I ought to rejoice at it, and I do. God bless him! I wish him success wherever he goes. But I must think of him no more," and putting on her bonnet and shawl, she went to visit her school.

When Lady Susan entered the breakfast room the following morning she found her mother deeply engrossed in reading a letter she had received by that morning's post.

"Susan," she said, after her daughter had taken her seat at the table. "Who do you think this letter is from? Who do you think has just arrived in England?"

"I can't imagine," replied the daughter.

"Your aunt!"

"What has brought her over so suddenly from Calcutta?" enquired Lady Susan, much astonished.

"Ill health. Her medical attendants assured her husband they would not answer for her life, unless she went home; so they packed her off by the first ship. She is now at an hotel at Southampton, and begs I will go to her without loss of time, as she is too weak to travel, and has nobody with her but a black servant, who is very inefficient."

"You will go, of course?"

"Yes, and you must accompany me; though it's very inconvenient, as we are at present circumstanced. Your utilitarianism will for once be of use. I can only give you two hours to prepare."

"I shall be ready, mamma, but—"

"But what?"

Lady Susan hesitated.

"Go on, can't you. We've no time to lose."

"Why, about Sir Alfred Fitzgerald," replied her daughter, still hesitating.

"Oh! I can't enter on that subject now," interrupted the Countess, rising, "I have a million things to do. You must write to Fitzgerald from Southampton."

"I *have* written," rejoined Lady Susan, her face flushing and her eyes cast down. "It was on my mind—I couldn't sleep for it—and here's the letter. I left it unsealed that you may peruse it before it is posted."

Her mother eyed her for a moment, and then said ill-temperedly—

"Well, give it me. I'll attend to it. Mind! we start at twelve," and taking the letter, the Countess left the room.

At the hour appointed Lady Susan came down. The butler was in the hall. She enquired if his mistress had given him any letters to post.

"Only one, my lady, which I have just dropped into the post."

"Who was it for?"

"Sir Alfred Fitzgerald."

Good. Her letter then, was gone, and

she was spared the necessity of making any enquiry respecting it of her mother, whose displeasure at her refusing the baronet she dreaded to encounter. She foresaw the storm looming in the distance which her contumacy would in all probability, bring down upon her. She stepped into the carriage with a heavy heart. To her great surprise, however, her mother, though sufficiently curt and sullen, made no allusion whatever either to the baronet or her letter, and rapid travelling through a succession of novel and pleasing scenes soon gave Lady Susan that buoyancy of spirit and capacity for enjoyment which dashing along behind four post horses in an easy travelling chariot seldom fails to inspire.

CHAPTER XV.

MAJOR FITZGERALD was no sooner settled in his new lodging than he hurried off to Portman square. Wilson, as was her wont, received him most affectionately.

"Where's Jackson? Where's your luggage?" cried she

"Oh! I'm in lodgings, dear Wilson."

"In lodgings, master Herbert?"

"Yes, in Berkeley Street. The place is more central—more convenient for me, when I want to go to the Horse Guards," urged Fitzgerald, not liking to give his true reason for not locating himself at his brother's mansion.

"But what have you to do with the Horse

Guards now, Master Herbert?" enquired Wilson, "There's no Frenchmen to thrash."

"No, that's true."

"Then what—"

"I'm going to India, my old friend," interrupted Fitzgerald.

A dark cloud shut out the sunshine in the good creature's countenance.

"What! off again so soon?" cried she at length, tears filling her eyes. "I was in hopes you would have remained some time longer amongst us, Master Herbert."

"You forget, my dear Wilson, my profession must be attended to. I've my way in the world to make yet. It won't do to be idle, you know."

"True—true. I'd forgotten that," pursued the old lady, passing her hand over her brow. "My lady left you nothing—more shame for her! God forgive me for saying so. Does your brother know you are going, Master Herbert?"

"No, not yet. But he suggested my taking service in India—"

"Humph! Indeed!" interrupted Wilson drily. "Oh! it was he, was it, who recommended your going there? Well, he's coming to-morrow, so—"

"To-morrow!"

"Yes; we're getting the house ready for him," rejoined Wilson, "and a precious job we've got of it. If everything isn't exactly as Sir Alfred wishes, he'll make more stir about it than any lady in the kingdom."

"This will save me a journey," said Fitzgerald, "for I must see him before I sail. You are sure he's coming to-morrow?"

"Quite sure. Two of his men servants have arrived, and from what they've let out, there has been fine goings on at Copton Hall. Dice, cards, and what not. The standard on the keep half-mast high all the time for a mother who loved him so fondly too. Oh! fie! fie! Forgive me, Master Herbert, but my feelings overpower me, and—"

"I can readily excuse you," said Fitzgerald, kindly taking the faithful old lady's

hand, "for I know you have the honour of the family at heart. I can assure I feel as indignant as yourself at this disgraceful conduct on the part of Alfred, and I mean to tell him so. Here, give him my card, and say I shall call the day after to-morrow, between eleven and twelve, and that I must see him."

"I'll be sure to do it," replied the old lady, "and mind you give it him well, Master Herbert."

"I shall not spare him, you may depend upon it," rejoined Fitzgerald, "Good morning."

"Well, good morning, if you must go," replied the housekeeper, shaking the hand which Fitzgerald offered, "I wish this Lady Susan would marry Sir Alfred. I suppose you have seen her, Master Herbert?"

"I have," said Fitzgerald, averting his head.

"And what do you think of her?"

"I think her all that's lovely and amiable,"

replied Fitzgerald warmly; "all that any man, however high his rank and fortune may be, could desire in a wife."

"My own opinion exactly," exclaimed the old lady, putting a detaining hand on his sleeve. "That is just what she is. If anybody could reform Sir Alfred it's Lady Susan. I wish with all my heart and soul he had her! Don't you, Master Herbert?"

"I wish he deserved her, Wilson," replied Fitzgerald, evasively. "I really must go, or I shall miss seeing Sugden."

"Yes," he muttered, as he hurried towards the Temple, "if Alfred would use her well, perhaps it were best he had her; certainly for his own sake, if not for hers, she cannot refuse him without mortally offending her mother. I wonder if she likes Alfred? I never heard her even mention his name. At all events I can't have her, so I'll do my best for both parties. There!" continued he, sighing, "that's to the memory of a passion dead and gone. Now to beat up Sugden's quarters."

He found the Temple deserted. He knocked several times at Sugden's door without being able to make anyone hear, and was on the point of leaving, when an old hag, in a coal-scuttle bonnet, emerging from the lower regions, told him Mr. Sugden was out of town, but that she would fetch Mr. Johnstone, if he wished it. At that moment the gentleman in question made his appearance, and unlocking the door, requested Fitzgerald to walk in.

"Is your business pressing, Major?" enquired the clerk, handing him a chair, "because the governor's down at the country house of the Lord Chief Justice, at Maidenhead; and as there's a lady in the case," added he, with a significant look, "he wouldn't care to be disturbed, I think."

"Certainly not," said Fitzgerald, smiling; "I'm very glad to hear that Mr. Sugden is so agreeably engaged. When do you expect he will be in town again?"

"Oh! the beginning of the week," replied the clerk. "In fact, he must come up, for

there's an arbitration, besides a host of things to attend to," pointing to a large pile of papers on the table.

"I am glad my friend has so much business on hand," said Fitzgerald.

"Business!" echoed the clerk; "he's overwhelmed with it. The attorneys seem ready to devour the governor the moment he puts his head into court. Business! if things go on at the rate they are now going we shall have more to do than we can possibly get through, Major."

"Well, give Mr. Sugden this card as soon as he comes to town," rejoined Fitzgerald, "and say I am very anxious to see him, as I'm going out to India."

"Going to India, Major, are you?" cried the clerk, playing with the card. "I wish I was going out with you; I'm heartily tired of this everlasting quill-driving, I can tell you. Good morning. I'll be sure to deliver your message to the governor, Major."

Fitzgerald then went home to his solitary

dinner. As may be imagined, he did not find his own company, under present circumstances, the most agreeable in the world, so he betook himself to Drury Lane, where he enjoyed a hearty laugh, and for the nonce forgot all his annoyances while witnessing the performance of Matthews and Liston in one of Theodore Hook's farces.

The old house in Portman Square wears quite a jaunty appearance. The window shutters are no longer closed, the street door is open, two footmen in splendid liveries, whom a recruiting serjeant would look upon with longing eyes, are lounging in high backed arm chairs, cracking nuts and jokes.

Mrs. Wilson, within, is going into every room for the twentieth time to be sure that everything is in perfect order for the reception of the baronet, whom she is momentarily expecting; while the French cook, who has travelled post all the way from Copton Hall to prepare his master's dinner, is venting his irritability on the kitchenmaid below.

In the Square a curious observer might perceive a shabbily dressed female, with her features carefully concealed by a veil, passing to and fro on the opposite side of the road. Every now and then she casts a searching glance at the house, carefully turning her head away whenever Mrs. Wilson makes her appearance at any of the windows.

On a sudden a bustle is observable. The footmen lazily stretch their legs and arms, regain their feet, and arrange their plush. Wilson makes her appearance in the hall. All eyes are turned towards the Square, and in a minute a light travelling chariot, drawn by four post horses, stops before the door. Booth springs from the rumble; the mysterious female darts across the road as Sir Alfred descends. As he pauses for a moment on the threshold the shabbily dressed female, carefully holding down her veil, regards him with a fixed and earnest gaze.

"I shall know him now!" she mutters to herself, and the next minute she is out of sight.

Sir Alfred, after exchanging a few words with Mrs. Wilson, strode languidly up to his dressing-room, and throwing himself into an easy chair, looked around him with an air of intense satisfaction.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed, "I began to think I should never get to town. How tired I got of that gloomy range of rooms, and those eternal mountains."

At this moment Booth entered the room with a tray full of letters.

"Has Browne sent the lavender water?"

"Yes, Sir Alfred," replied Booth.

"Good. Browne never disappoints me," said the Baronet with a yawn. "Capital fellow is Browne. Tell the cook to let me have something *piquante* for dinner. Booth, I'm sadly out of appetite, and the perusal of these letters, I suppose, will not be likely to improve it."

"There's one from Doubty, Sir Alfred, I see," said Booth.

"Yes; this is from Doubty that I've

opened. He's not in the habit of saying anything cheering. Ah! Don Juan is lame! Positively the only horse I depended on. A dead loss there. I must give up my stud, that's certain."

"Don Juan may recover, Sir Alfred," said Booth, leaving the room.

"And he may not," said his master peevishly, "and in the meantime the rest of the horses are eating off their heads."

"Ah! this is from the Countess Trelawney," he cried, opening the letter eagerly. "Now, Fortune favour me here, and—how! not a line from Lady Susan! Let's see what her mother says," and he read as follows:—

"My dear Sir Alfred,

"I have only time to say that we are just starting for Southampton, where my sister lies seriously ill. Susan will write the first opportunity.

"Yours in great haste,

"Trelawney."

"How very vexatious," exclaimed the Baronet, tossing down the Countess's note. "What business had that old cat to fall sick just at this precise moment? Now I shall be kept in a state of suspense till Lady Susan has leisure to relax in her utilitarianism."

Booth re-entered the room with a card on the silver waiter.

"Whose card is that?"

"Your brother's," said Booth, presenting the card. "He was here yesterday, and Wilson desires me to say he will call to-morrow between eleven and twelve o'clock, when he *must* see you."

"Must, eh?" said Sir Alfred. "Well, let him come. Since I *must* see him," muttered he to himself, "the sooner I get over the interview the better. Thank Heaven! he's not here. I do verily believe that if I were under the same roof with him his presence would drive me mad. My things to dress, Booth," he added aloud.

At seven the baronet sat down to a dinner

which the greatest epicure in the world must have pronounced faultless, but which did not satisfy the palate of Sir Alfred.

"How you like zat soup, Sir Alfred?" enquired the Frenchman, who, according to custom, superintended the serving up of the first course.

"Oh! pretty well," replied the baronet, disparagingly. "It's very fair, but isn't there too much cayenne in it?"

"What! too much cayenne, Sir Alfred?"

"Yes—rather—that is—"

"Zen you shall make ze soup to-morrow yourself," interrupted the Frenchman, bouncing out of the room.

"The rascal! He knows his value," said Sir Alfred, shrugging up his shoulders. "Give me the fish, John."

The fish gave no better satisfaction than the soup, and the ragouts still less satisfaction than the fish. In fact the baronet found fault with everything except—with himself.

At the hour Major Fitzgerald had ap-

pointed, he called at Portman Square, and was shown into the dining-room. He was earnestly gazing at a full-length portrait of his father by Sir Joshua Reynolds, which hung over the side-board, when his brother lounged in. Fitzgerald greeted him cordially, for he had come in the spirit of conciliation, but fully determined by every argument he could think of to rouse his brother, if possible, to a true sense of his duty, as well as to insist on a satisfactory explanation on those points which more immediately concerned himself.

"Why didn't you come to the old place?" asked Sir Alfred, coldly.

"Berkeley Street is more convenient for my outfit," replied his brother.

"Then you go to India?"

"Yes. I saw Lord B—— yesterday, and everything is settled."

"I congratulate you. When do you sail?"

"I am not certain at present. In the

meantime I want to have some very serious conversation with you, Alfred," continued Herbert, earnestly, "on subjects of paramount importance to us both."

"I'm sorry to hear it," said Sir Alfred, yawning, "for I've had enough and to spare lately of serious conversation with Billing and Holmes."

"I will be as brief as possible, for both our sakes, my dear Alfred," rejoined his brother, still more earnestly. "Indeed, I heartily regret that it is requisite for me to touch upon these subjects at all; for, as you may imagine, it is not very pleasant to be obliged to assume the mentor and lecture my elder brother."

"How!" exclaimed Sir Alfred, haughtily.

"Do not be offended, my dear Alfred," pursued his brother, taking his hand, "for what I am going to say to you is more in sorrow than in anger. We shall soon part perhaps to meet no more. Let us part friends, therefore. Do not force upon me the additional burden

of bearing your resentment for only doing what I consider a sacred duty, especially as it is meant to benefit yourself. Think! we stand alone in the world, my dear Alfred! Let us not be at variance."

"Well, go on," said the baronet, impatiently, "only be cautious you say nothing I ought not to hear or you to speak."

"Imagine, then," said the Major, pointing to his father's portrait, "that it is *he* who speaks, and you may the easier do this, since the words which fall from my lips are precisely those which I feel convinced would have fallen from him under similar circumstances."

"Well, well, go on can't you? and have done with it," cried Sir Alfred, still more impatiently.

"In a word, then, I know all, Alfred," said the Major, with some hesitation.

Sir Alfred turned deadly pale.

"All what? I don't understand you," he gasped, at length.

"Ask your conscience," said the Major,

reproachfully. "Your mother loved you well; is this how you respect her memory? Shew your obedience to her wishes."

"You—you're wrong—you mistake," stammered Sir Alfred, excessively confused and agitated. "I swear to you, Herbert, by all that's sacred—"

"I don't wonder that you are ashamed of what you have done," interrupted Herbert, with a contempt he could not conceal; "but it is useless your denying it, such transactions cannot be hid, whatever precautions you may take, and those who are so unprincipled as to engage in them, must be prepared to take the consequences, however humiliating and disastrous these may be. I trust, however, your losses to *your friends* will not seriously embarrass you; and if they have the effect of detaching you from the gaming table they will not have been in vain."

The baronet breathed more freely. He was obviously relieved.

"My good fellow," said he, with a sneer,

"You don't know what you are talking about. You speak as if you were wigging one of your subalterns for losing a month's pay at billiards and neglecting to pay his mess bill. Nobody thinks the worse of a man in my station for rattling the bones a bit, if he pays his losses. I don't know how you heard of mine; but this I do know, they don't concern you, and I shall not allow you to interfere."

"You mistake, Alfred," cried his brother, warmly. "They do concern me, and I have a right to interfere; you can't act as you have done without in some measure compromising me; if you have no regard for your character I beg leave to say I have for mine."

"It is not worth my while to be angry with you," said the baronet, contemptuously; "if I had lost twice as much, the sum I shall get down with Lady Susan would make all straight besides leaving a handsome surplus to set us going."

The Major walked to the window, but in a minute returning, he said—

"I hope—I trust, Alfred, you will appreciate this young lady—will make her as happy as she deserves to be."

"Of course I shall," rejoined his brother, carelessly. "As you observe, Lady Susan is a delicious creature, and I'm very much attached to her; she shall have no cause to complain; she shall have the best diamonds, the best carriages, and drive the best horses of any lady in England; in short she shall have *carte blanche* to do what she likes—go where she likes. I shall not interfere with her."

"I doubt if this will make Lady Susan happy, my dear Alfred," said his brother, gravely.

"The devil it won't," exclaimed Sir Alfred, starting. "What more would she have?"

"A good deal more and a good deal less," replied his brother. "Unless I am very much mistaken, Lady Susan has no desire to act apart from her husband; she would rather he went hand-in-hand with her in all she does;

as for diamonds and carriages, she does not care a fig for them."

"Indeed!" said the baronet, with a yawn. "Then I shall have the handsomest—the most philosophic wife in the peerage. Have you anything further to say?"

"Nay! that is a question I should ask. Have *you* nothing to say to *me*?" enquired the Major, significantly.

"No, nothing—nothing particular, I think," said his brother, looking down, "only get as much out of the India Company as you can. Ah! there's the perfumer's man come with the perfumes I ordered."

"Your perfumer's man must wait," said Herbert, sternly. "If you have nothing to say to me, I have more to say to you; but first of what immediately concerns yourself."

"Sir!" said the baronet, fiercely.

"Don't let us quarrel, Alfred," interrupted his brother, mildly. "I wish not to offend, but to serve you, when I conjure you to forsake a course which you yourself have con-

demned, and which you must admit is both derogatory and ruinous to you. Come, my dear Alfred," continued he, taking his brother's hand, "begin a new career, as I am about to do. Come! let us both enter for the cup Honour. I challenge you to the race; and if you are inconvenienced by your losses, I've fourteen or fifteen thousand pounds which are quite at your service; is it a bargain?"

Sir Alfred did not immediately answer. He was evidently undergoing some severe mental conflict.

At length,

"Let me go!" exclaimed he wildly. "Oh! save me from myself!" and snatching away his hand, he rushed out of the room.

In a few minutes Booth entered.

"Sir Alfred," said he, "is seriously ill. He hopes you will excuse him, Major, as he's quite unable to converse at present."

"I will call again to-morrow," replied Fitzgerald, and leaving the house he strolled into Hyde Park, and flung himself upon the first

seat he came to. Fitzgerald had not been seated many minutes when a shabbily-dressed woman came up and bounced down on the bench beside him, exclaiming, as soon as she had recovered her breath, "What a pace you walk! You've precious long legs of your own. I remember them when they were not quite so long. I can walk tolerably fast myself, but I can't keep up with you. Of course you don't recollect me?" and she raised her veil.

"No," replied Fitzgerald, much surprised at this unceremonious address. "I have not the slightest recollection of you, or who you are."

"But I know you, though," rejoined the stranger, laying her hand upon his arm. "I've been opposite side of the road in Portman Square for more than half-an-hour in hopes of catching you if you came out, as thank heaven I have done. What a fine fellow you have grown!"

"Why, what business can you possibly

have with me, my good woman," enquired the Major, still more surprised.

"Don't call me a good woman," replied his companion, knitting her brow. "I'm not a good woman, though I once was, and might have remained so, if it hadn't been for—but no matter. I have business with you—very particular business, business that is of the greatest importance to us both, and which you must attend to, without the slightest delay—I know you will."

"Certainly, if I ought to do so. Pray who are you?"

"You'll know me as soon as you hear my name—or, rather what my name was, before my second marriage. It's Dobree now, but it was Singleton then."

"Singleton!" echoed Fitzgerald, recoiling with evident disgust. "Yes; I do know you now, I have good reason to do so," continued he, flushing with indignation, as the enormous cruelties this woman had inflicted upon him crowded upon his imagination. "Begone!

I'm astonished at your assurance in speaking to me."

"Hoighty! toighty! here's a go," cried Dobree, or rather Singleton, with a loud laugh. "How grand we are! Is this the way in which you meet me after so long an absence? You'd better alter in your tone, and treat me more civilly, I can tell you, or it will be the worse for you."

"If you persist in obtruding yourself on me," pursued Fitzgerald, with increased indignation, "I'll call a constable."

Dobree's eyes flashed fire.

"You'll give me in charge of a constable, will you?" said she at length, speaking within her teeth. "Do so—do so, my haughty spark, and see what will come of it."

"Oh! that's plain enough. You'll get punished, and I shall get rid of you."

"Humph! That's your notion, is it?" said the woman, with a sneer. "Try it, my jewel, —try it, and you will find yourself mightily

mistaken; you will discover that I am not quite so easily got rid of as you seem to imagine. But I've no wish to injure you—or to quarrel with you—quite the contrary, heaven knows, I love you too well," and she pulled out her handkerchief and pressed it to her eyes.

Fitzgerald stared, and she proceeded—

"Come! Don't turn up shabbily. Have a little patience, and let us understand one another. My husband is dead—he has left me friendless—almost penniless. I had no prospect of supporting myself in America, so I'm come back to England to ask you to assist me, and to put me into some way of getting an honest living."

"To ask me!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, greatly astonished.

"Yes, to ask you—to ask *you*," almost screamed Dobree. "Who else can I look to, now my lady's dead."

"To anybody, or everybody, in preference to me. Of all the people in the world, you

have the least possible claim either upon my purse or my sympathy. You must be mad to ask me to assist you in any way."

"Well, upon my word; *you* to call me mad; *you* to talk thus to *me*. I could not have believed it of you," exclaimed the woman, in a towering passion. "You are the last person in the world that ought to have behaved thus to me. But no matter—no matter," and she resumed her most defiant tone. "The upshot of this business is just this—I've pawned everything—I'm starving, and if you don't relieve me instantly, and come down pretty handsomely too, it shall be the worse for you. I know," and her face assumed a diabolical look, "I know that which shall make every limb in your body tremble—Sir Alfred though you be!"

"Oh! I see now—I understand," said Fitzgerald, rising, "you mistake me for my brother."

"Your brother!"

"Yes, you mistake me for Alfred."

"And are you not Alfred?" she asked, the colour forsaking her face.

"No! Herbert."

"Well," she continued, "I could have sworn you were the man I saw get out of his carriage yesterday."

"The strong personal resemblance between us has misled you, Mrs. Dobree," said Fitzgerald. "You know we are twins, and—"

"True—true," muttered she, extremely disconcerted. "Nobody knows that better than I do; and people say you are as alike as two peas. I wish I'd cut my tongue out before—"

"If you want to see my brother, why don't you go to his house?"

"What! in these filthy rags! No, I'd rather starve or die in the street."

"Why so?"

"Why so. Do you think I'd give Wilson such a triumph over me?" cried the woman, passionately.

"Well, you know your own business best,"

said Fitzgerald, going. "I'm sorry to see an old servant of the family so destitute, and if this will be of any service to you, I shall be glad," and putting a guinea into her hand, left her.

The woman eyed the gold for a moment, and then looking after Fitzgerald's retreating figure, said—

"Well, he is a generous-hearted fellow! I don't deserve his kindness, for I was a perfect brute to him. I've a good mind to go after him and try to make terms. I've no doubt he'll come down handsomely." Here she paused, then after a few minutes, she continued—"No! I should not like to injure Alfred. Besides, it will be time enough to bargain with him if the baronet behaves shabbily, which he may, perhaps, do. I will write to him, and send the letter by post. In the meantime this guinea will keep me. I don't think I let out anything to Herbert that can do harm. It was most fortunate the discovery was made before I said more."

CHAPTER XVI.

Passing along Pall Mall, Fitzgerald met Lord Alwaysailing, looking the very picture of misery, as if all the cares of the world were on his shoulders.

"It's horrible!" exclaimed his lordship.

"What's horrible!" enquired Fitzgerald.

"This everlasting easterly wind!" his lordship replied, shivering. "It positively cuts like a razor—it goes right through one. There is positively something supernatural in it. It's a ghost, if ever there was one."

"Then it's not a *material* grievance," said Fitzgerald, laughing.

"No, but punning is, sir," replied his lord-

ship, snappishly. "I'm surprised you are guilty of such a weakness, Fitzgerald. But I am glad I have met you. I've a dinner party to-day—a lot of *he* fellows coming, that I'm obliged to ask; and you must help me through with it. Come, I'll take you down with me, and give you a bed. Will you go?"

"With pleasure," said Fitzgerald, glad to escape passing the evening alone in his lodgings. "But I must return early to-morrow. I've an engagement then which I cannot neglect."

"Very well, I'll send you back. I'll call for you at five. Where are you?"

"In Berkeley Street."

"What number?"

"Six."

"Good, I'll not forget it, *au revoir*. How that horrible east wind searches me. I do believe it blows harder and keener upon me than anybody else."

Lord Alwaysailing was punctual, and Fitzgerald equally so, and they arrived at

Hounslow in time to dress. Like all sworn grumblers, his lordship was careful to make himself comfortable, and to do him justice, to make every one else comfortable too. Comfort was his primary object. Even fashion was made to succumb to it. In all probability his house at Hounslow was the best appointed establishment of its kind in all England.

Fitzgerald found a good blazing fire in his bed-room, which, as the evening was very cold, proved not unacceptable.

"If all these luxuries were indispensable," thought he, looking around him, "what dependent creatures we should be! But half-a-dozen campaigns have taught me otherwise; and the man who can sleep soundly wrapped up in his coat the lee side of a hedge on a rainy night holds these luxuries cheap."

At dinner, which was first rate, conversation turned on gaming.

"What you call cheating in this country," said a German, "is no cheating at all."

"Then what do you call cheating?"

"Why such as is practised at Wiesbaden. A sharper puts on a big pair of spectacles."

"How do these spectacles enable a man to cheat?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Because they magnify so much, that he is enabled to see some very minute marks he has made on the cards, impossible to be seen expect by means of a magnifying glass."

"But how could he get at the cards to make these marks upon them?" asked Fitzgerald, who was much interested.

"Oh! easy enough," replied the German; "he manufactured the cards."

"Manufactured the cards!" exclaimed all.

"Yes; he made the cards for the bank."

"And was the bank a party to this trick?"

"No; the bank suffered by this man's cheating, and was nearly ruined. At last he was suspected, and his spectacles being taken from him, their great magnifying properties enabled the bankers to discover the fraudulent marks on the cards."

"What was done to the man?"

"Oh! he took the opportunity of leaving the room whilst the examination of the cards was going on, and was not seen in Wiesbaden again."

It was late when the party broke up; but Fitzgerald found it impossible to get to sleep. The events of the past twenty-four hours pressed upon his mind, and although his couch was most luxurious he closed not his eyes till daylight, when nature's kind nurse came to his relief, and steeped his senses in forgetfulness.

It was twelve o'clock on the following day when Lord Alwaysailing's carriage dropped Fitzgerald in Portman Square. To his extreme disappointment Booth informed him that his brother continued too much indisposed to see any one, and Fitzgerald was forced to quit the house again, without being able to obtain the information he anxiously desired. The next day and the next Fitzgerald received the same answer, and he at length began to suspect that his brother

would not, if he could possibly avoid it, see him at all. Mrs. Wilson was unfortunately confined to her bed by a rheumatic attack.

Fitzgerald was brooding over his disappointment in his solitary lodging, when to his great pleasure Sugden was announced.

"When did you arrive?" asked Fitzgerald.

"About a couple of hours since," replied his friend; "when I reached my chambers I found that my clerk had spread out such an ocean of litigation on my table that I had not courage to plunge into it, so I came on to you."

"And glad enough I am to see you. You dine with me of course?"

"Yes; but you must let me go in the evening. I've an engagement."

"Then I must, though I shall be sorry to lose you. I understand you have been staying at the Lord Chief Justice's house?"

"Yes; we had a very large party there."

"And a very attractive one, I hope," said Fitzgerald, significantly.

"Oh! that traitorous clerk of mine has been telling tales," said Sugden, laughing and colouring. "I see I may as well be candid, and confess the truth. I have proposed to one of the best and sweetest girls in all England."

"And been accepted, of course?"

"Yes."

"I congratulate you with all my heart, my dear Sugden," said Fitzgerald, sighing. "The love of such a girl must be invaluable."

"I assure you I consider it so," replied Sugden, gravely, "for I am convinced Maud will make me one of the best wives in the world! I have known her since she was sixteen—ever since you and I were lions, you know—but that unlucky poem was against me. Her mother did not like the idea of her daughter marrying a briefless barrister who was a poet to boot, and so very properly, as I now think, discouraged my attentions."

"Ah! we view these occurrences through

a different medium as we get more advanced in years," observed Fitzgerald.

"To be sure," continued Sugden; "we do not condemn parents and guardians as being quite such cruel, cross-grained, old curmudgeons as we suspected; when they do stop the course of true love it is only, nine times out of ten, because it would lead the lovers into a quagmire, as would certainly have been the case with Maud and myself if her mother had not prevented it. But when, with improved prospects, I met the dear girl again the other day her mother threw no obstacles in my way; and on my proposing for Maud, very frankly told me she had always liked me, and did not wish for a better son-in-law."

"That was satisfactory," said his friend.

"Yes, very," pursued the lawyer; "in fact we are on the best possible terms. But I have not only brought my bird down, but I have brought her up," continued he, laughing;

"Maud and her mother are now at an hotel in Albemarle Street."

"Indeed; then you must introduce me," said Fitzgerald.

"With pleasure," said his friend. "Suppose we go to them after dinner."

"With all my heart," said Fitzgerald.

"You will be delighted with Maud Anstruther."

"Maud Anstruther!" echoed Fitzgerald.

"Yes; her mother is sister to the Dean of ——. Did you ever meet her?"

"Never that I remember; but I have heard my friend Stevens talk of his pretty cousin a hundred times."

"Then you are acquainted with Colonel Stevens?" said Sugden.

"He is one of my most intimate friends," rejoined Fitzgerald. "I've been expecting a letter from him in answer to one I wrote, and I cannot imagine the reason of his silence."

"I can solve the mystery," said Sugden; "he has been too ill to write."

"Too ill!" exclaimed Fitzgerald.

"Yes; too ill, poor fellow! And I am sorry to say is still in a very weak state; so weak, indeed, that he is coming over on the sick list."

"Poor Stevens! How grieved I am; I wish I could see him."

"Well, your wish can soon be gratified, for I am going to the Docks this very evening to meet him, and bring him on to Mrs. Anstruther and Maud, who have come up to town for the purpose of taking the invalid with them to the Deanery."

"Then I shall most assuredly accompany you," said Fitzgerald.

"Do," cried Sugden; "it will be a great comfort to poor Stevens to see somebody he knows."

"Then you don't know him?"

"No; I'm a total stranger to him. But we'll take coffee with the ladies before we start."

"With all my heart," said Fitzgerald.

"Is it correct that you are going to India?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes," said Fitzgerald, with a sigh which he was unable to repress. "Yes, a career is now opened to me there, and—"

"Well, I'm glad of it for your own sake," replied Sugden; "otherwise—" and he pressed his friend's hand warmly.

The latter returned the pressure.

"Believe me, I am sorry to be parted from you, dear Sugden," cried Fitzgerald, in a husky voice; "but it is better—far better for me, under all circumstances, that I should go."

After dinner, the two friends, as arranged, adjourned to the ladies in Albemarle Street.

"This is, indeed, an unexpected pleasure," said Mrs. Anstruther, when the lovers had retired to a distant sofa. "I am delighted at the opportunity of making your acquaintance, Major Fitzgerald Both Maud and myself have often wished to know you. Sugden has so frequently mentioned you in his letters,

that I cannot help looking upon you as an old friend already."

"You do me great honour," replied Fitzgerald, bowing, "and I can assure you, my dear Mrs. Anstruther, the pleasure is reciprocal. Dr. Johnson, it is, I believe, who says we ought to keep our friendships in repair, and I make a point of doing this whenever I have an opportunity."

"You are quite right," replied the lady, "or death would, in the end, leave us without any friends at all, and we should find ourselves in a new generation alone; and what is still worse, uncared for; I suppose," continued she, glancing at the lovers. "You know Maud is engaged to Mr. Sugden?"

Fitzgerald nodded.

"Yes, and from what I've heard, and from what I now see of Miss Anstruther," said he, "I am convinced my friend Sugden will be, as he deserves to be, a happy man."

"It will not be Maud's fault if he is not," resumed Mrs. Anstruther. "My daughter is

just what you see her, Major; she carries her character in her countenance. She possesses all those qualities which wear well, and which contribute so materially to the happiness of married life. Mr. Sugden will not only find Maud the faithful guardian of his interests, but what is, perhaps, even of still more importance, he will have a companion in her also."

"An immense advantage," said Fitzgerald; "if a man cannot obtain a companion in his wife, he is apt to seek one elsewhere."

"Especially if he be highly educated, and of literary tastes," pursued Mrs. Anstruther, "the wife of such a man should be neither commonplace, nor illiterate; and Maud, though an excellent housewife, and competent to direct her servants, has not only been accustomed to literary society all her life, but is her uncle's amanuensis."

"Such a coadjutor will be invaluable," rejoined Fitzgerald; "and as for Sugden himself—"

"Oh! you need not say a word in praise of Sugden," interrupted Mrs. Anstruther, smiling; "that is quite unnecessary. From the very first hour I knew him, I could see what he is capable of; and only regretted that his talents had taken a wrong direction. Nobody rejoiced more than myself when he recovered his lost ground; and when the Lord Chief Justice informed me that he had invited Mr. Sugden down to his country house, I resolved to give him every encouragement if he renewed his attentions to Maud. When do you sail?"

"I am unable to say," Fitzgerald replied; "it may be a week—it may be one, two, or three months."

"You ought to take a wife out with you, Major Fitzgerald," cried Miss Anstruther, advancing.

"Whose wife shall he take, Maud?" said Sugden, laughing; "not mine, I hope."

"Wait till you have one," retorted Miss

Anstruther; "you can't lose what you never had."

"Very true, my dear," pursued her mother, with a smile; "and when Mr. Sugden has a wife, he'll perhaps not be quite so fearful of losing her."

"That remains to be proved, as we lawyers say in the courts," said Sugden.

"Not in the courts of Love, I presume," observed Maud.

"I believe this is for you, ma'am," said a waiter, entering at this moment, and giving a letter to Mrs. Anstruther.

"Yes; 'tis from the housekeeper," replied the lady, examining the superscription, "and has been forwarded from the country. What in the world can she have to write about?"

"No bad news I hope, mamma?" said Miss Anstruther.

"Good heaven!" exclaimed her mother, turning very pale. "We must go home im-

mediately; your uncle has had a fit, my love."

"But what are we to do about Stevens, mamma?" cried Maud, greatly agitated.

"True—true," rejoined her mother; "I'd quite forgotten him. There, read—read, Mr. Sugden, and advise me what to do."

"Pray make your minds easy, ladies, about Colonel Stevens," said Fitzgerald. "I will see to him, and—"

"Yes; that will be the best thing to do," said Sugden, looking at his watch. "Do you do all that is required for your friend, while I see the ladies off in the mail; they've an hour yet."

"I will get ready immediately," said Mrs. Anstruther, going. "Come, Maud."

"When does the steamer come in?" enquired Fitzgerald.

"Between nine and ten," replied Sugden.

"Then I'll start at once, and take Jackson with me," said Fitzgerald.

"Do," rejoined Sugden; "it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. This will give me time to prepare for the consultation I have to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVII.

On boarding the steamer Fitzgerald was much shocked to find his old friend, Colonel Stevens, in a state of utter prostration from the effects of the voyage. The poor fellow was so shattered in constitution as to make it impossible for him to bear the jolting of a carriage over the stones of the London streets. Fitzgerald, therefore, had him carried to the nearest hotel, where he was immediately put to bed by Jackson, and a physician sent for. The latter prescribed a composing draught, which very soon sent the invalid to sleep. Fitzgerald, after securing a bed for himself, despatched Jackson to Jermyn Street to in-

form the landlord of the arrangement he had made. He then went down to the coffee-room to take some refreshments.

The hotel was situated at the corner of one of those narrow streets leading on to Tower Hill, and although the landlord dignified the place by calling it an hotel, it was neither more nor less than a public-house, frequented by skippers and travellers, arriving or departing by the various steamers, who wanted accommodation for the night.

There was no one in the coffee-room, which smelt of rum and stale tobacco. The rain was falling in torrents, making everything look dreary in the extreme, consequently Fitzgerald's position was anything but an enviable one. The waitress was quite of a piece with everything around—a dirty, slatternly girl.

"Can I have coffee?" asked he.

"Yes, sir; what will you take with it?" was the rejoinder.

"Nothing else."

The coffee was brought in, and Fitzgerald endeavoured to while away the time by glancing over the leading article of "The Daily Advertiser."

He was thus occupied when two men entered the coffee-room. The elder, who wore a coarse pea-jacket, and looked like what he was—a skipper—said to his companion, a young man of somewhat aristocratic appearance—

"Now, Mr. Antrobus, let me advise you not to leave the hotel on any account."

"Of course I shan't," exclaimed the other. "Do you think I'm a water-fowl or a fish? It's raining cats and dogs."

"Aye, and there's more to fear in the streets at this end of London than the rain," rejoined the skipper. "It's awfully dangerous for a young gentleman like you to be cruising about alone after nightfall, take my word for it."

"I don't want you to tell me anything,

sir," replied Antrobus, with considerable hauteur. "I suppose you think I ought to have my nursemaid with me to take care of me. I fancy I am quite capable of taking care of myself."

"Well, don't put a bullet into my head," said the skipper, laughing; "I didn't mean to offend you; I only told you for your own good."

"I know you did," exclaimed the Irishman, warmly, "and I ought to be dragged through a horsepond for taking huff at it, and I beg your pardon. May I die if—"

"Don't say another word, my good fellow," interrupted the skipper; "I've too many humours to put up with to feel umbrage at a trifle. I'd have taken you aboard at once, but I've business with the owner of the vessel. I shall call for you to-morrow morning at five, so be sure to be ready, for it won't do to miss the tide."

"Oh! be easy, my friend," rejoined the

young man; "I'll just be waiting on the doorstep. Oh! I'll be sure to be ready, if I sit up all night for it."

"I don't want you to do that," returned the skipper, smiling; "I'd rather you turned into your crib early, and then you'll be snug, you know; but I'd advise you to lock your door. There are many in this cursed city would steal the teeth out of your mouth without your being aware of it."

"Oh! they'd have some difficulty in doing that same thing," replied the young man, "as I always sleep with my mouth shut."

"I'm not so sure of that," cried the skipper. "I only wish to warn you. As you are placed under my care, if any harm comes to you I shall be blamed, you know."

"Oh! I'd rather be bottled up like an imp, and sealed in a pickle jar, than that should happen," exclaimed his *protegé*, with considerable vehemence. "Pray make your mind easy on that score. You'll find me whole and entire with my teeth in my head,

when you come for me in the morning. But take some grog before you go to keep the cold out, or a bottle of wine—a—"

"Not either, thank you," said the captain, preventing his ringing the bell; "nothing now; nor must you take anything except a little tea or coffee. You must avoid all fermented liquors as you would old Nick, or it may be the worse for you. Good-night! Be sure to be ready in the morning. By Jove! how the rain is coming down."

And buttoning his pea-jacket the man hurried off.

Antrobus seated himself at a vacant table, and after beating "the devil's tattoo" for a minute, started up again, and walked to the window.

"Wet night, sir," said he, flattening his nose against the glass, and addressing Fitzgerald.

"Very," replied Fitzgerald, sipping his coffee.

"Hope it will be a fine morning; I'm sailing for Canada to join my regiment."

"Ah! a military man," cried Fitzgerald, becoming interested.

"A bit of a one, sir," rejoined the young man, laughing. "I'm only just gazetted, and I never expected that; but I've had the luck of it at last. My mother wanted to make a barrister of me, and sent me to Trinity College. But ours is a fighting family, sir; the family leaven kept working so strongly within me, that faith, sir, I was unfit for anything else, so my friends got me a commission, and that's how you see me Ensign Antrobus."

"What regiment are you in, Mr. Antrobus?" enquired Fitzgerald.

"The ——th, sir. My uncle commands it."

"I know him well," replied Fitzgerald, "and an excellent officer he is. We were billeted on the same house at Salamanca."

"Then you are a soldier, and know my uncle?" exclaimed the excited youth. "Well, that accounts for my taking such a fancy to you the moment I saw you. Let me shake

hands with you, sir. I am proud of your acquaintance whoever you are. Whom have I the honour of addressing?"

"Major Fitzgerald."

"Major Fitzgerald! By the powers I've heard my uncle speak of you a thousand times. Yes, a thousand times, sir; he was never tired of talking of you. Oh! you're a real gentleman, and a brave soldier every inch of you. Let me grasp your hand again, sir, I'm delighted at making your acquaintance. Only to think, sir, of my stumbling upon you in this out-of-the-way hole!"

Colonel Stevens's servant came in to say his master was awake, and wished to see the Major immediately, and Fitzgerald quitted the room with the servant. They had scarcely left, when the dirty waiting-maid ushered in a man, whose travelling-cap was pulled completely over his eyes, and his coat buttoned up to the chin, and holding a black leather bag in his hand. He cast an anxious glance around, and said, in an undertone—

"Can I have a bed?"

"Of course you can," returned the girl, impatiently. "Come this way." And they left the room together.

In a few minutes the new comer returned, and seated himself apart from Antrobus; and ringing, ordered a glass of brandy and water and the newspaper, and when he got these, he sat reading, his nose almost touching the paper, as if he were near-sighted.

Antrobus, by way of breaking the silence, got up and paced the floor, casting wistful glances at the stranger, who, on his part, inquisitively eyed the young man whenever he thought the latter was not looking at him.

At length the young man, no longer able to resist the temptation, seated himself opposite to the stranger, exclaiming—

"Deadly lively place this; I hope I don't disturb you, sir?"

"Not at all, sir," replied the other, putting down the newspaper; "on the contrary, I'm

glad to have some one to talk to, this miserably wet night."

"Faith! you may well say miserably wet night. It's worse than being cooped up in Noah's ark, with the smell of stale tobacco constantly in one's nostrils. I'll just follow your example, sir, and take a glass of negus. That can't be called a fermented liquor any how," and ringing, he ordered a glass of that beverage.

"Long from Ireland, sir?" asked the stranger.

"No, just caught," replied Antrobus, laughing. "Haven't had my tail cut off yet, sir! I believe the people take us Irish for ourang-outangs."

"Pardon me," replied the stranger, respectfully. "The English are far too shrewd to undervalue a nation which has produced such men as Grattan and Sheridan! a Burke and a Wellington! For my part," continued he, raising his voice; "I venerate green Erin.

Erin-go-brah was always my motto, and ever shall be!"

"By the powers, you're a trump!" exclaimed the excited youth, seizing his new friend's hand, and nearly shaking it off. "You're the best fellow I've met with since I left Dublin. Oh! you're an oasis—a green spot that my heart reposes upon. Curse this insipid stuff. We'll drink prosperity to old Ireland in a glass of something stronger," and jumping up, he pulled the bell vigorously, and when the drab of a waitereśs came in, he ordered a bowl of hot rum punch.

They were discussing the beverage, when Fitzgerald returned.

"Ah! my dear sir," cried Antrobus, "you see we are trying hard to put down the blue devils in this wretched hole of an hotel. I hope you will join us. This gentleman is a regular trump, and takes 'Erin-go-brah!' as his motto, and though he is near sighted, by the powers! he can see as far into a mill-stone as the best of 'em!"

"You must excuse me," said Fitzgerald; "I have several letters to write for a sick friend upstairs, who—"

"Will be all the better for a tumbler of this punch, which I will send him," interrupted the impulsive Irishman.

"I don't think hot rum punch the thing best calculated for a man burning with fever."

"On the contrary," said the stranger, scrutinizing Fitzgerald; "it is the very worst thing he could take. But we are preventing you from writing your letters, sir."

Fitzgerald made no reply, but seating himself at a table, commenced his task.

The punch began to tell on the young Irishman.

"By St. Patrick!" he exclaimed; "let us do something. I wish they had a billiard table here."

"Or a back-gammon board," replied the stranger; "or—"

"What?" cried the youth, impatiently.

"Why, I was going to say a pack of cards. But they daren't let us have them."

"Daren't!"

"No. It would endanger their license. But I can manage it. I've got a pack in my bag upstairs, and if we say nothing about it, they'll no doubt be blind to what we are doing. Shall I fetch it?"

"Yes, to be sure, and be quick about it," said the youth.

The cards were brought, and Antrobus, pulling off the envelope, for it was a new pack, threw it on the floor.

"Now, what shall it be?" he cried, shuffling the cards; "picquet or ecarté."

"Ecarté, if you prefer it," replied the stranger, putting on his spectacles.

"What a quiz you look like," said the youth, laughing; "can't you play without mounting those gig lamps?"

"No," said the stranger, rather pettishly. "What shall we play for?"

"Whatever you please," returned the young Irishman.

"Will half crowns be too much?"

"Not a bit of it," said Antrobus, rubbing his hands; "I'm a dab hand at ecarté."

"I am not."

Apparently the former had not overrated his skill, for he won nearly every game.

"Let us try picquet," said Antrobus; "I told you I was well up in ecarté."

"It's only your luck," said the stranger, angrily. "Suppose we make the half crowns guineas?"

"With all my heart. But it's like picking your pocket."

At this moment the girl entered with a tray full of glasses, but seeing how the two were engaged, left the room, banging the door violently after her. The draught caused by this wafted the envelope to the feet of Fitzgerald. He picked it up and was going to throw it down again, when the words, "Smidt, Wiesbaden, manufacturer," caught

his eye. The conversation of a previous evening at Lord Alwaysailing's instantly occurred to him.

"I wonder if that fellow be the manufacturer of the cards. It assuredly looks like it, for he plays in spectacles, and though he speaks English with a foreign accent, he pronounces the word 'very' like a Scotchman. But this fellow has no whiskers, and his hair is black. He may have shaved off the first, but I'll soon ascertain whether he wears a wig," and rising, he reached the newspaper from behind the stranger, and in doing so detected several red hairs underneath the black.

Satisfied now that his suspicions were correct, Fitzgerald was turning over in his mind the best way to act, when the landlady burst into the room, and going to the gamblers, said—

"I insist on your giving up your game instantly, for you are endangering my license. I can't allow cards in my coffee-room."

"Pshaw! don't bother, woman," cried Antrobus, who was losing. "I wish old Nick would fly away both with you and your license. Go on, man, never mind her!"

"But I'll see who's mistress in this house, sir," cried the now angry woman. "I'll hand you over to a constable if the cards are not instantly put away—sir," she continued, turning to Fitzgerald, "please explain to this young man the injury he will do me if he persists in playing."

Fitzgerald gladly availed himself of the opportunity of rescuing his young friend. But all his endeavours were unavailing, for the punch he had swallowed made him pugnacious, and he swore he would not leave off for the king, and insisted that his antagonist should go on with the game. This latter, however, securing the cards, whispered that he would give him his revenge upstairs, and seizing a bed-candle, left the room, followed by Antrobus.

"I should only do harm by interfering at

this moment," thought Fitzgerald. "Let Antrobus smart a little. It will be a lesson for him in the future. I can expose Smidt at any time," so he proceeded with his letters, and when he had finished he went went up to Stevens, to see how he was going on; as he passed Antrobus's room, he could hear the gamblers engaged in their unhallowed calling.

Stevens felt so restless, that it was nearly two hours ere Fitzgerald could leave him. On entering his chamber, which was only separated from that of Antrobus by a slight partition, he heard the play still going on.

"What infernal luck you have," he heard the Irishman exclaim; "but I've twenty pounds still left. I'll play you for that. Cut, sir."

"No, no," replied his antagonist, "you really must excuse me, I'd rather not play any more. It's getting late. Besides, as I've told you, over and over again, you are no match for me, and—"

"I tell you it's your infernal luck," interrupted the youth, impetuously. "You'd not have a shadow of a chance if it were not for that. I insist upon having my revenge."

"Not now," persisted the stranger. "Let me pass. Some other time."

"Look ye, Mr. What's your name," said Antrobus, sternly; "I'm not to be trifled with. To-morrow I sail, and I will have my revenge now, so sit down, and let's have no more words about it."

"Wilful man!" rejoined the stranger. "But mind, now—"

"Play!" cried Antrobus, furiously.

A dead silence.

"There! I told you so," said the stranger, at length; "I told you, you had no chance against me. Good night. I wish you better luck another time," and Fitzgerald heard him go into his own room, which was opposite.

"Now is my time," thought Fitzgerald; and he followed the sharper so closely, that

the latter had only time to put the cards down on the table and take off his wig, when Fitzgerald confronted him.

"Now, Mr. Smidt, or whatever your real name may be," said Fitzgerald, securing the cards. "Let us come to an understanding at once. I am acquainted with the whole affair at Wiesbaden, and quite comprehend how you have been enabled to fleece Mr. Antrobus to-night. Either deliver up the whole of your plunder this moment, or I'll give you into the custody of a constable."

"What do you mean?" asked the stranger, savagely.

"Just what I say," replied Fitzgerald, coolly.

"I don't understand you, sir," replied the other. What do you mean by this insolent intrusion? I was never at Wiesbaden in my life, and my name is Mackenzie. If you don't give up those cards and instantly leave the room, I'll give you in charge for the theft."

"Do so, and I'll have these cards examined through a microscope; I'll order a constable to be sent for," and he attempted to ring the bell, but the sharper prevented him.

"I don't know who you are," said he, biting his lip; "but if I have given that coxcomb a lesson, he'll be the better for it as long as he lives. Why shouldn't he pay for it?"

"Not at the price you have taken. Nor are you qualified to be his monitor."

"What right have you to interfere?"

"The right that every honest man has to protect another from injustice, when he has it in his power."

"I think I understand you. Name your price."

"Price!"

"Yes; tell me what I'm to pay you to keep all snug. Come, don't be hard upon a fellow."

"Mr. Mackenzie," said Fitzgerald, indignantly, "you've mistaken your man; I am neither to be bribed nor bullied. Infamous

scoundrel!" he continued, in a tone not to be misunderstood, "either give up all the plunder you have made, or you know the alternative."

"Curse the money," cried the discomfited man, throwing the notes on the table. "Take them and give me back my cards."

"Is everything here?"

"Every stiver; I'll swear it. So give me up the cards."

"I'm scarcely justified in doing so," said Fitzgerald, complying, "nor would I, did I not hope the non-exposure may induce you to seek a more honourable mode of living," and leaving the sharper, he went over to Antrobus's room, and knocked at the door several times without receiving an answer.

Fitzgerald knocked again, but received no answer. He tried to open the door, but found it locked.

"Antrobus," he cried, in a peremptory tone, "let me in, or I will force the door."

This threat succeeded, the door was opened, and Antrobus exclaimed—

"What do you want?"

Fitzgerald made no reply, but entered the room. On the drawers lay a loaded pistol, which Fitzgerald took possession of.

"Now listen to me calmly, Antrobus. In a word, I know all. I'm quite aware of the extent of your losses, and—"

"No! That's impossible," interrupted the youth, "you may know I am cleaned out, but there's one thing I've lost, that you cannot know, and you don't know, and that's my honour," and throwing himself into a chair he sobbed bitterly.

"Come, come, rouse yourself, Antrobus. Be a man! don't give way to feelings which—"

"I hope you don't think I'm a coward!" exclaimed the youth starting up.

"That's the last thing I should accuse you of," rejoined Fitzgerald. "But you must now show yourself *morally* brave and control your

feelings, the indulgence of which can do no good, but may be productive of a great deal of harm."

"That's true, my friend!" said the youth, grasping his hand. "What it is to have a friend in need. I'll be better on the guard for the future; I'm glad you don't think me a coward, any how. I'd rather die than be thought a coward by a brave man like you. But you don't know what an ass I have been. It drives me wild to think of it. That fellow in the goggles—"

"I'd have warned you against him, but you would not listen to me."

"It was most ungrateful of me, but I've suffered tremendously for my ingratitude. That vagabond urged me on to play, till I'd not only lost all my money, but three hundred pounds belonging to my uncle."

"You have done wrong, but—"

"Wrong!" interrupted the Irishman, wringing his hands, "I am the greatest scoundrel in existence. I don't know what

to do! I shall never be able to hold up my head again and look my uncle in the face. I shall certainly shoot myself. I'd have done it before this if you hadn't interrupted me and seized the pistol."

"And atoned for one crime by committing a worse," said Fitzgerald, "besides putting it out of your power to make reparation. You must confess that's rather an Irish way of settling things, my dear Antrobus."

"Oh! it's past that when a man's ruined!" said he, dejectedly.

"Come, come, cheer up. Things are not so bad but that they might be worse; your situation is not so desperate as you imagine, or you may be sure I should not have spoken of it so lightly. Depend on it all will come right, and you may hold up your head as high as you please if you will be more careful and less impulsive for the future. Here! see if all the money you have lost is there," he said, placing the money he had received on the table.

"Well, I really believe you are an angel sent from Heaven to watch over me, though I can't see your wings," exclaimed the astonished youth, gazing alternately at Fitzgerald and the money; "as I'm a sinner! and there's no doubt of that, here's every stiver, every stiver. What shall I do to show my gratitude! Mention the most impossible thing, and—"

"All I require of you, my dear fellow is, that you promise never to gamble again."

"I'd sooner swallow red hot iron, or dance all the rest of my life on spikes. Sure I've learnt a lesson that I'll be the better for the rest of the days I shall live. But how, in the name of all that is incomprehensible, did you make that aggravating brute disgorge?"

"I knew him to be a swindler," said Fitzgerald, "so—"

Antrobus rushed out of the room, but immediately returning, exclaimed, "He's off! The rascal has bolted, or I'd have broken every bone in his villanous skin."

"And I should have had to get you out of a worse scrape still," said Fitzgerald, laughing.

"Well, I'll never be impulsive again," cried the youth, "never, I'll shoot myself through the head first! But give me your address, sir, that I may have the benefit of your advice and assistance when I get into another scrape, which I never mean to do again."

"You think the office will be a sinecure?" said Fitzgerald, handing him his card. "A letter addressed to me at either of those places will always find me; and now, God speed you, my dear fellow. Remember me kindly to your uncle, and—"

"It's little good I can do any one, Heaven knows," said the youth, in a broken voice, wringing Fitzgerald's hand, "but a mouse once saved a lion, and if I thought I could ever be of the least service to you, my dear Major, I'd come from the furthermost end of the world to do it."

"That I'm sure you would," said Fitzgerald;

"your heart's in the right place, but control its impulses. Once more, God speed you," and Fitzgerald hurried away to his friend Stevens.

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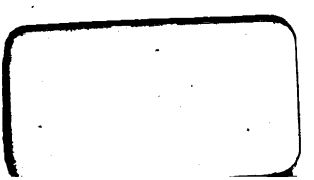
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